
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BENSALEM TOWNSHIP

BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

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Mayor and Township Council

Joseph DiGirolamo, Mayor

John DiEgidio, Council President

Bill Maddocks, Council Vice President

Edward Kisselback, Council Secretary

Joseph Szafran

Joe Pilieri

Edward Rudolph, Solicitor

Joseph Pizzo, Solicitor

Township Professional Staff

William Cmorey, Community Development Director

Matthew Takita, Building and Planning Department Director

Harold Gans, PE, Township Engineer

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

For much of the post-World War II period, Bensalem Township was a fast growing suburban community that experienced large population increases. From 1950 to 1980, the Township's population grew almost 500%. This explosive growth was easily accommodated since there was a large amount of undeveloped land that was developed for a variety of residential, commercial and industrial uses. During the 1980s, the population growth leveled off significantly, signaling an end to the large-scale increases that were experienced the last 30 years. Bensalem has established itself as a desirable place to live and conduct business, but the Township has evolved into a "mature" community. The Township now has to manage existing development and potential redevelopment in order to preserve the quality of life expected by residents.

In order to guide future development within the Township, the Mayor and Council have commissioned the preparation of a new Comprehensive Plan (hereinafter referred to as "the Plan"), the first update since 1988. The Mayor and Council have determined that the Plan must reflect the current conditions of the Township and set forth goals and objectives that are both achievable and consistent with preserving the Township's quality of life.

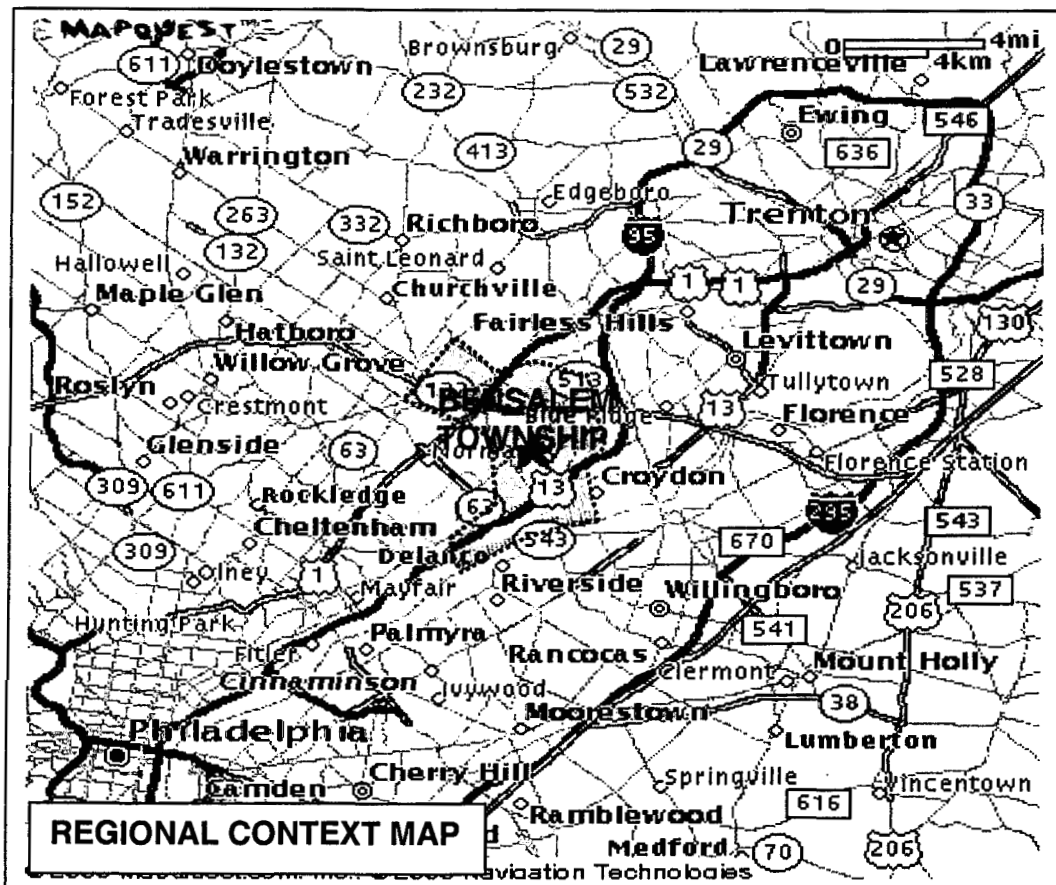
Preparation of the Plan is based on Section 301 of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code. The Township has developed the Plan to reflect the unique circumstances affecting the present and future development of Bensalem. The Plan shall include the following elements:

- Goals and objectives for the short- and long-term development and needs of the Township residents.
- Land use plan to guide development patterns, outlining opportunities for decreasing vacant land and underutilized parcels.
- Circulation plan addressing ongoing improvements to highways and streets, development of mass transit options, and future projects and their effect on the Township.
- Housing plan to address present and future needs of the Township
- Review of economic conditions of residents and business climate, including income and employment data.
- Inventory of community facilities serving Township residents.
- Open space and recreation plan outlining existing facilities and future development and preservation.
- Historic and cultural resources plan to utilize and promote existing resources.
- Statement indicating relationship of existing and proposed development to neighboring municipalities and to regional trends.
- Outline of short- and long-range plan implementation strategies to guide future development in the Township.

This Comprehensive Plan has been prepared under the direction of the Bensalem Township Mayor and Council, with the assistance of the Bensalem Township Planning Commission, Township staff and other boards. The Plan is intended to serve as an advisory document, providing goals and objectives to observe in making day to day decisions regarding development issues such as land use, transportation, housing, open space, community facilities, and utilities. The Township should use the Plan as a framework to guide future growth that balances the needs of a community of almost 60,000 people with preserving the quality of life that has made Bensalem a desirable community to live and work in.

1.1 Regional Context

Bensalem Township is located in Lower (southern) Bucks County, with its westernmost limits bordering the City of Philadelphia. One-sixth of the nation's population lives within 30 miles of the Township. Major highways service the Township, including the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Interstate 276), Interstate 95, U.S. Route 1 (Lincoln Highway), U.S. Route 13 (Bristol Pike) and State Route 132 (Street Road). Turnpike Interchange 28, at U.S. Route 1, is located within the Township. Interstate 95 is the major thoroughfare between Bensalem and Center City Philadelphia.



To the southeast is the Delaware River, bordering New Jersey. Neshaminy Creek to the east serves as the boundary between Bensalem and the Bucks County municipalities of Bristol Township, Hulmeville Borough, and Middletown Township. The northernmost limits of the Township border Lower Southampton Township. Center City Philadelphia is located approximately 15 miles southwest of Bensalem.

Bensalem comprises almost 21 square miles in area and is home to over 58,000 residents, according to 2000 US Census data. Although the Township is best known as a suburban "bedroom" community for Philadelphia, Bensalem has many of the characteristics of a large city, including a diversified economic base. The Township is the most populous municipality in Bucks County, having a population greater than such Pennsylvania cities as Lancaster, Wilkes-Barre and the state capital of Harrisburg.

Bensalem Township serves as a crossroads between Philadelphia and its northern suburbs, attracting large numbers of shoppers to its malls and retail centers. In addition, Bensalem serves as headquarters to many employers based in professional office complexes and industrial parks.

1.2 Physical Characteristics

Bensalem is made up of many neighborhoods, hamlets and developments, each having a unique identity and special characteristics. Communities such as Andalusia, Cornwell Heights and Eddington Park are located along Bristol Pike. Land uses near the Delaware River vary from industrial parks along State Road to the close-knit neighborhoods of Echo Beach and Torresdale Manor. Street Road includes many small- and large-scale commercial developments, as well as nearby residential developments such as Eddington Gardens, Nottingham Village and Linconia Park, among others. A mix of older residences and new subdivisions are evident in the Neshaminy Falls, Oakford and Trevoise areas east of Brownsville Road, the boundary with Lower Southampton Township. North of Bristol Road and east of Hulmeville Road, various residential neighborhoods range from single-family homes to trailer parks. In addition, retail development, senior housing and designated open space areas are prevalent throughout the Township to serve the needs of this maturing community.

Bensalem Township is situated within two distinct geological regions. The area south of the Conrail/Amtrak right-of-way paralleling Interstate 95 is within the coastal plain region. This area is characterized by relatively flat land of less than 5% grade and ranges in elevation from 15 to 35 feet. North of the right-of-way is the Piedmont, a geological area of predominantly rolling topography with occasional concentrated rock formations. The elevations in this area range from 35 to 250 feet.

Two major stream systems and the Delaware River drain the Township. Neshaminy Creek, along with a system of natural drainage courses, drains approximately 60% of the Township while the Poquessing Creek and its tributaries drain much of the remainder of Bensalem. Soils have been classified according to subsurface drainage characteristics. Approximately two-thirds of the Township contains soils that are well drained.

Although the entire flood plain area along Neshaminy Creek does not necessarily contain poorly drained soils, this area is not likely to drain as well as other areas in Bensalem. In addition, there are numerous areas within the Township that can be classified as wetlands. Many of these areas are located near or adjacent to the Delaware River, Poquessing and Neshaminy Creeks, as well as other areas throughout the Township.

Delaware River

Bensalem Township is located on the Delaware River approximately 175 miles south of its headwaters in the Catskill Mountains of New York State. From the Township, the river flows generally southwest past Philadelphia to Wilmington, Delaware. There is over 4 miles of Delaware River frontage within the Township. The river ranges from 2,200 feet wide at Neshaminy Creek to 3,300 feet just east of Mud Island.

Neshaminy and Poquessing Creeks

Neshaminy Creek forms the eastern boundary of Bensalem Township, draining an area of 233 square miles. This consists of a mix of suburban and agricultural development almost entirely within Bucks County. Due to the growth of areas north of the Township, both the Neshaminy and Poquessing Creeks have experienced increased problems associated with siltation and excessive water runoff during storms.

The lower portion of the Neshaminy Creek is within the tidal basin of the Delaware River. Flood plain development should be controlled either by zoning or open space development in the flood plain, unless additional man-made structures are provided to prevent future floods.

Thirty years ago, the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Commission proposed damming Neshaminy Creek. When a dam proposal was reviewed in the late 1980s, the Bucks County Board of Commissioners, the county's governing body, decided that the dam was not the most cost-effective solution. In 1992, Bucks County completed the Neshaminy Creek Stormwater Management Plan in order to prevent stormwater runoff due to new development from flooding communities downstream. Bensalem Township adopted a Stormwater Management Plan based on the Neshaminy Creek Plan by means of Ordinance #93-3.

Ground Water Resources

According to the 1988 Comprehensive Plan, ground water is characteristically clear, where it flows from springs or is pumped from wells. The quality of the ground water is satisfactory for most uses. In a few locations, the iron content is such that the water is unsuitable for household use without treatment. The quantity of dissolved solids varies and is related to the repeated application of fertilizer to the land as well as poor drainage. The chemical quality of wells situated near the Delaware River is similar to the quality of the river valley.

The 1988 Plan noted that virtually the entire Township is serviced by municipal water, there has been a phase out of most residential wells and industry is no longer reliant on ground water.

Available EPA data shows that Bensalem Township has had no health based, monitoring, reporting or other violations regarding its drinking water in recent years.¹ The EPA has no record of any health-based violations reported by the State for this water system since 1993. The monitoring and reporting data covers a period from 1995 through 1998.

Air Quality²

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in accordance with the Clean Air Act of 1970, has developed national Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The EPA measures different types of air pollution to determine attainment or non-attainment of national air quality standards. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has adopted additional standards to supplement Federal guidelines and to more

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Center for Environmental Information and Statistics, Environmental Profile for Bucks County, PA – Drinking Water*. data extracted July 10, 1999.

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards; AIRSData Monitor Values Report*. 1994-1999.

strictly regulate air quality within Pennsylvania. In 1990, the Township passed an ordinance regarding environmental factors such as noise and air pollution.³

The air quality station that monitors the Bensalem Township area is located in Bristol Borough, approximately 2.3 miles from the Township. The pollutants monitored from the Bristol station are as follows:

- Carbon Monoxide (CO)
- Nitrogen Dioxide (NO²)
- Sulfur Dioxide (SO²)
- Particulate (PM¹⁰)
- Ozone (O³)
- Lead (PB)

The 1999 measurements indicated that the levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide conform to State and Federal air quality standards. This is also true of the measurements of particulate, last measurement data from 1998, and lead, last measurement data available from 1995.

According to EPA data from 1994 through 1997, the maximum allowable levels of ozone were exceeded for 8 days during that four-year period. Data from 1998, the most recent information available, shows that ozone levels at the Bristol monitoring station were in compliance with State and Federal standards.

Based on the data available at this time, the Bristol station information indicates that none of the aforementioned pollutants are exceeding State and Federal thresholds, and the air quality in the area is generally satisfactory.

1.3 Demographics

Beginning with the 1990 US Census, the explosive growth that was a standard for Bensalem Township throughout the post-World War II period has slowed down significantly. While the Township has quintupled in population since the 1950s, the slower growth patterns prevailing during the 1980s and 1990s indicate a maturing community. The population for Bensalem Township as of the 2000 US Census is 58,434, an increase of 2.9%.

Table 1: Population Growth – Bensalem Township						
YEAR	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
POPULATION	11,365	23,477	33,038	52,399	56,788	58,434
# CHANGE	--	+12,112	+9,561	+19,361	+4,389	+1,646
PCT. CHANGE	--	106.6%	40.7%	58.6%	8.4%	2.9%

³ Code of Township of Bensalem: Chapter 91, June 11, 1990.

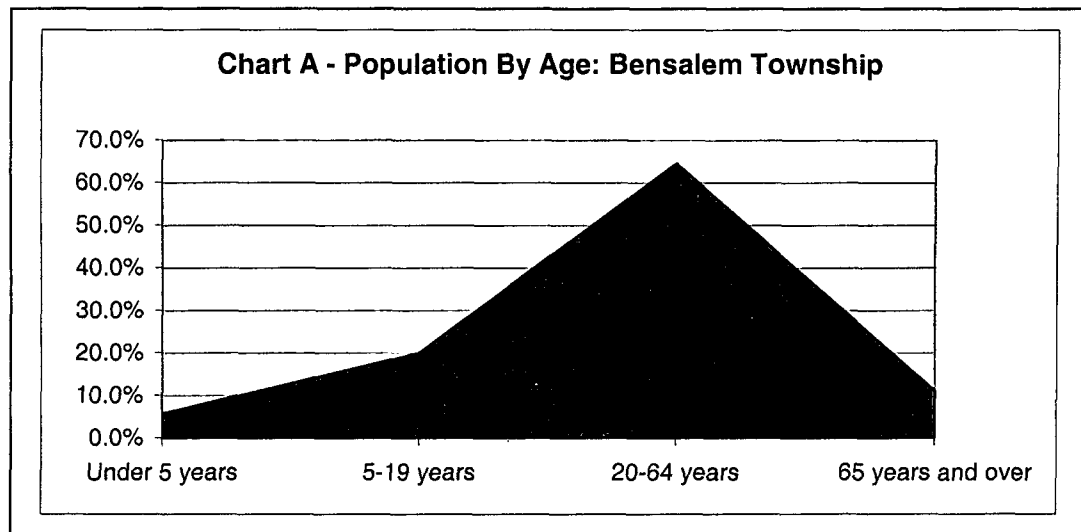
According to the 2000 US Census Data, Bensalem Township is the most populous municipality in Bucks County, surpassing neighboring Bristol Township is larger, which as a population of 55,521. The 1988 Plan projected the Township having 65,000 persons by 2000 and between 70,000 and 74,000 by 2010. Reviewing recent growth trends and the current level of land use in the Township, it is unlikely that Bensalem will achieve such population levels in the next ten to twenty years. The slower rate of population growth is an indication that the Township is maturing and the majority of the developable parcels in Bensalem are being utilized. According to the Township Department of Community Development, the number of housing units is expected to only increase by a very small number – about 100 units per year – most of which are likely to be senior housing units.

Bucks County, as a whole, continues to grow at a more rapid pace than Bensalem Township, reflecting the population increases in Upper Bucks County. With a 2000 population of 597,635, Bucks County grew 10.3% during the 1990s, continuing the double-digit growth that was indicated in the 1990 Census data.

The 2000 US Census Data reveals growth in the Hispanic and Asian communities in Bensalem Township. The percentage of Asians in the Township almost doubled during the 1990s, from 3.6% to 6.6%. Similarly, the Hispanic population doubled in both the Township and the County. Bensalem's Hispanic population increased from 2.2% to 4.3%. The Township's White population decreased as a percentage from 88.7% in 1990 to 82.5% in 2000. Bensalem Township has a greater percentage of racial and ethnic minorities than Bucks County as a whole, as noted in Table 2.

Table 2: Racial and Ethnic Origin				
	2000 US Census Data		1990 US Census Data	
	Bensalem Twp.	Bucks County	Bensalem Twp.	Bucks County
White	82.9%	92.5%	88.7%	95.1%
Black/African American	6.9%	3.3%	6.9%	2.8%
Asian	6.6%	2.3%	3.6%	1.5%
Other**	3.6%	1.9%	0.8%	0.6%
Hispanic/Latino##	4.3%	3.2%	2.2%	1.5%
## Hispanic/Latino can be of any race. ** 2000 Census Data includes mixed race				

The age of Bensalem's population is generally comparable to Bucks County as a whole. The school age populations -- 5 through 19 years of age -- are similar, but Bensalem has a higher percentage of its population less than 5 years of age, reflecting a greater need in future years for school system resources.



Although the percentage of senior citizens – those 65 years of age and over – is lower in Bensalem than throughout Bucks County, their numbers are steadily increasing. With this population increase, the need for services continues to grow. These needs include assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and other health care and social needs. The accelerating growth of the senior citizen population is an issue that Bensalem Township, like other municipalities throughout the nation, must address in its short- and long-range planning.

1.4 Prior Comprehensive Plans

1966 Comprehensive Plan

During the 1950s and 1960s, Bensalem Township more than doubled in population, reflecting the initial large-scale population movement from the cities to the developing suburbs. The 1966 Plan was initiated as a result of the growth pressures experienced by the Township. In addition, the completion of Interstate 95 through Bensalem opened a major transportation route through the Township, providing easier access to Philadelphia and points south as well as Trenton and points north. The primary goal of the 1966 Plan was to preserve Bensalem as a low-density residential community and to focus commercial development along Street Road.

Since it serves as a link between Interstate 95 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike/U.S. Route 1 interchange, Street Road was expanded and widened to handle the expected increase in traffic. The Plan also emphasized low-density single-family residential construction with green belts interspersed between residential and non-residential areas, banding major waterways with open space and parks.

The Plan's vision was not implemented. As a result, two major rezoning actions that were not anticipated in the 1966 Plan greatly impacted future land use in the Township:

- Four hundred (400) acres rezoned for a racetrack (Philadelphia Park).
- Rezoning substantial areas in the east-central section of Bensalem for light industrial use, despite these areas being recommended for low-density residential development.

1974 Comprehensive Plan

The 1974 Plan attempted to address requirements for commercial and service support uses. The need resulted from the higher than expected population density and the development of the racetrack. The Plan recommended medium- and high-density urban development, as well as an urban town center centrally located within the Township. Contrary to the recommendations of the 1966 Plan, an intensive urbanization of Bensalem was set in motion.

1988 Comprehensive Plan

The 1988 Plan sought to develop a more aesthetically pleasing community environment, a more functional series of systems to service the Township, and to shift the tax burden away from residential property owners to new commercial developments.

Among the recommendations included targeting underutilized parcels for office development and encouraging low-density single-family housing and luxury townhouses. These recommendations were intended to correct perceived imbalances in the distribution of land uses. The Township also encouraged stronger enforcement of the building codes and sign ordinances to create a more aesthetically pleasing environment throughout Bensalem.

The 1988 Plan also recommended utilizing Bensalem's physical amenities, especially the Delaware River waterfront. The goal was to provide greater accessibility while preserving the environment and natural resources. These recommendations were designed to capitalize on the Township's location and to develop underutilized parcels in a manner sympathetic to the environment of Bensalem Township.

Several of the issues outlined in the 1988 Plan are relevant to the present. Determining the development and redevelopment of parcels along the Delaware River waterfront is a primary issue for the Township. Bensalem also continues to have the goal of shifting the tax burden away from residential property owners to commercial development. Open space and recreation issues discussed in this plan were cited in 1988, declaring the need to preserve the environment and natural resources along the Delaware River. Now this goal is relevant to the whole Township.

2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Comprehensive Plan outlines a list of goals and objectives concerning the future development of the municipality. These include, but are not limited to, issues such as the location, character, and timing of future development and growth of Bensalem Township. The purpose of these goals and objectives is to identify key issues regarding land use, housing, circulation, community facilities and open space, among other issues. Bensalem Township seeks to develop goals and objectives taking into account regional trends and their effect on present and future development.

The overriding goal in Bensalem Township is preservation of the Township's suburban character. Bensalem is a community of neighborhoods, each with its own unique identity. The common goal is the desire to prevent further urbanization of the Township. Each neighborhood should be developed in such a way as to balance the needs of economic development and environmental preservation. As the amount of available developable land is reduced, the Township must utilize its resources – including the different housing types available throughout its neighborhoods, the office and retail commercial development already developed, its prime regional location, the Delaware River waterfront – in a way to prevent “sprawl” and uncontrolled growth. Preserving the quality-of-life in Bensalem should be done keeping in mind the desire to accommodate growth that minimizes the burden on schools and current residents while maximizing the economic potential of the Township. Included in the overriding goal of preserving the character of Bensalem Township are the seemingly contradictory goals of encouraging economic development, providing greater opportunities for senior housing, preserving open space and developing new public recreation areas, and most efficient utilization of diminishing vacant land. The objectives outlined in the plan are intended to minimize contradictions as the Township continues to grow in a positive manner.

The following objectives are summarized according to Master Plan element and are not listed in order of priority. These objectives provide specific means to ensure that future development will be compatible with the Township's planning goals. The Master Plan has attempted to balance conflicting objectives where possible.

Land Use

1. Taking into consideration the limited availability of vacant parcels and to prevent further imbalances in the distribution of land uses, the Township should encourage the development as commercial and office space, age- restricted housing, including assisted living facilities, low-density single-family housing and luxury townhouse development.

2. Encourage attractive office and retail development along commercial corridors such as Street Road and Bristol Pike. All new development should meet uniform signage criteria that controls visual clutter through reasonable sign regulations.
3. Consolidate older, declining commercial centers into more clustered centers of higher intensity use to enhance convenience. Particular attention should be given to large underutilized tracts within the Township.
4. The Township should encourage the preservation of open space and environmentally sensitive areas, including the Delaware River waterfront. Development that allows greater accessibility to these resources in concert with preserving the environment should be encouraged.
5. Encourage creation of a waterfront development overlay district that would provide for mixed uses including multi-family residential development, age-restricted residential development, water-oriented uses and open space. District should have specific bulk and design standards to balance development with waterfront access for all.
6. Creation of neighborhood commercial districts in areas of Andalusia, Trevoise and other neighborhoods to distinguish between the highway commercial and regional shopping malls along Street Road and near US Route 1 from those businesses designed to service local needs.
7. Consolidate several existing commercial districts along Street Road and near US Route 1 into one uniform highway commercial district, providing specific development standards and appropriate uses along these heavily traveled corridors. Larger scale commercial and professional office development would be centered in this zone.
8. Expand the existing recreation zoning district to include parks, public commercial recreation facilities, waterfront and stream corridors, greenways and other protected open space. Currently, the above land uses are scattered among various zoning districts.
9. The Township, in concert with Bucks County, should encourage key parcels, such as those used for private recreation purposes (day camps, golf courses, etc.), to be preserved through acquisition for future parkland and open space at a time if and when that property owner decides to sell the land.

10. Amending the PCD Planned Commerce Park zoning district to allow for a broader range of uses, permitting the development of age-restricted residential facilities, including assisted living and community care retirement communities, in addition to mixed use commercial, professional office and recreation uses.

Circulation

1. Work with SEPTA to determine the viability of expanding mass transit options, including expansion of bus service to underserved areas and encouraging park and ride lot use.
2. Determine if there are capacity issues along minor arterials and collector roads within the Township. Future growth will be limited if the circulation network is not capable of supporting additional traffic.
3. Work with surrounding communities and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to ensure that the Interstate 95 interchange project moves forward with minimal detrimental impact on the residents and environment of the Township while maximizing the potential for future economic growth, with particular attention to mixed-use office development near the Exit 28 interchange.
4. Work with County, State and Federal departments to continue to obtain funding for transportation infrastructure improvements in the Township, either now underway or in the planning stages.
5. Develop strategies to reduce congestion along major and minor arterials as well as at key intersections throughout the Township.

Housing

1. Review the Township's code enforcement program and strengthen those elements requiring improvement. Ensure the presence and continuation of an ongoing program to protect the quality-of-life in Bensalem's neighborhoods as well as preserve property values.
2. Maintain and enhance existing housing stock of Bensalem Township with rehabilitation initiatives focusing on older neighborhoods in the Township. Bensalem should utilize Community Development Block Grant funding and other sources to make improvements in low/moderate income areas.

3. Increase availability of housing for senior citizens, taking into account the needs of growing segment of population. Encourage development of assisted living and other senior citizen oriented residences on larger underdeveloped lots not targeted for commercial or office uses.

Economic Development

1. Utilizing the Bensalem Office of Economic Development, encourage the development of adequate tax rates to provide quality services without placing a disproportionate cost burden on residential property owners.
2. Promote Bensalem's role in regional economic development through participation in the Enterprise Zone of Bucks County.
3. Continue to review other options – other than traditional retail commercial and professional office development – to increase economic activity. Other potential options include riverboat gambling along Delaware River waterfront, slot machines at Philadelphia Park Racetrack, minor league sports complex, and theater and arts complex, among other opportunities.
4. Promote Bensalem as a regional retail center, especially the Neshaminy Mall area and the Street Road corridor.

Parks, Open Space & Natural Resources

1. Identify, protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and natural systems, limiting disturbance of areas such as floodplains, steep slopes and wetlands.
2. Preserve, protect and enhance natural and man-made visual resources, including existing scenic corridors. Encourage site plan review to minimize environmental disruption.
3. Identify historic buildings, structures, site and roads to encourage preservation for the education, pleasure and welfare of Bensalem Township residents and visitors.
4. Cooperate with neighboring municipalities to create greenways along Neshaminy and Poquessing Creeks. This cooperation should also include discussion of floodplain issues and minimizing impact on surrounding area.

5. Continue enhancement of the Township park system through upgrading of existing facilities and future acquisition of environmentally sensitive properties.
6. Develop awareness of historic sites and preservation within the Township to promote historic and cultural awareness and as part of a broad economic development plan. This includes Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Shrine in Cornwells Heights, the home of St. Katherine Drexel, a key figure in the American history of the Catholic Church.

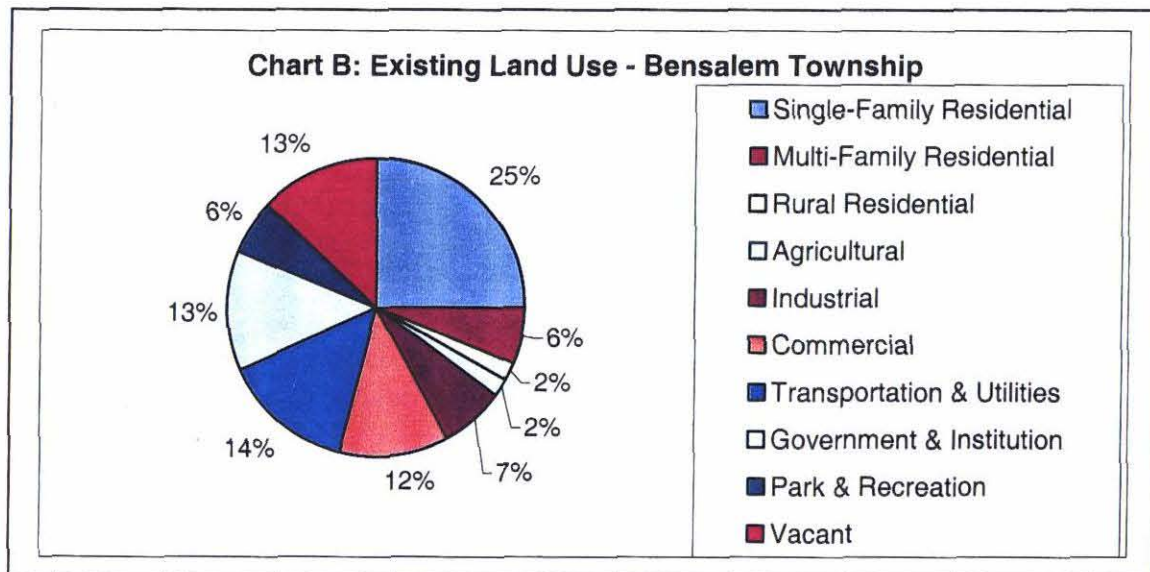
Community Facilities and Utilities

1. Provide superior quality municipal services to meet the needs of all of Bensalem's citizens, especially the growing population of senior citizens and children within the Township.
2. Protect the health and safety of those who live and work in Bensalem by encouraging an environment free of air and noise pollution and other similar nuisances.
3. Study water and sewer infrastructure to determine if capacity is available to support potential maximum buildout now permitted under current zoning regulations.
4. Utilize Geographic Information System (GIS) to enhance services for both residents and staff, and to identify infrastructure and land uses to guide future development and redevelopment.

3.0 LAND USE

The 1988 Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Element spoke of "developable land distributed throughout all areas of the Township." The amount of developable land available is now significantly reduced. Bensalem comprises 19.96 square miles of land area and 0.99 square miles of water area.⁴ Approximately 12.8 percent, or 1,633 acres, of the 12,775 acres that makes up the Township is considered vacant land, a decline from the 2,180 acres recorded in the 1988 Plan. A significant portion of the vacant land remaining is environmentally sensitive and/or difficult to develop.

Bensalem's land use policy has moved from the luxury of "both" to the constraints of "either or." This change reflects the Township having matured in its development. Difficult choices will have to be made regarding how the remaining developable land will be utilized. Concerns such as affordable housing, economic development, a growing school-age population and an increase in the senior citizen population are placing difficult demands on developable land within the Township. **Chart B** outlines the land use characteristics of the Township.



⁴ Bucks County Planning Commission. *Bucks County Continuum – Lower Bucks Region, 1990 Land Use Characteristics*. January 1994.

Residential development in Bensalem Township totals 4,311 acres,⁵ an increase from the 4,179 acres reported in the 1988 Plan. From 1989 through 1998, 411 housing units were proposed in the Township.⁶ According to the US Census Bureau information on recorded building permits during the same period, there were 927 dwelling units added in the Township. Residential acreage makes up 32% of land use, as opposed to 34% in 1980.

Non-residential land use doubled in size from 1970 through 1990. Forty-six percent of the Township was comprised of non-residential land use in 1990, a significant jump from 34% in 1980 and 23% in 1970. Over 1,500 acres are for commercial uses, including office buildings and complexes, large- and small-scale shopping areas and other commercial uses. Industrial land use has declined, from a reported 963 acres in the 1988 Plan to 885 acres, representing a trend toward a more service oriented economic sector in the Township.

About 192 acres in Bensalem are currently assessed as farmland, less than half the number of acres reported in the 1988 Plan. Some of these parcels have existing homes on them so the actual developable acreage is somewhat less. The vacant land has declined to 1,633 acres. These parcels comprise the remaining developable sites within the Township. Issues such as open space and environmental concerns must be taken into account when considering future disposition of these parcels.

As the availability of developable land has declined, the Township has looked into other options to generate commerce and revenue. Among the options considered include higher density residential development, riverboat gambling along the Delaware River waterfront, slot machines at Philadelphia Park Racetrack, the construction of minor league sports facilities as well as theater and arts facilities, all of which would have a significant impact on Township development.

In order to ensure greater consistency in zoning and land use, Bensalem Township should seek to eliminate "split zoning," that is where lots are divided between two zoning districts. Such a move would reduce confusion regarding what land uses are permitted or appropriate for a particular area or neighborhood. As the community has matured and has limited developable land, there must be clarity regarding the development of remaining parcels in Bensalem.

⁵ Ibid.

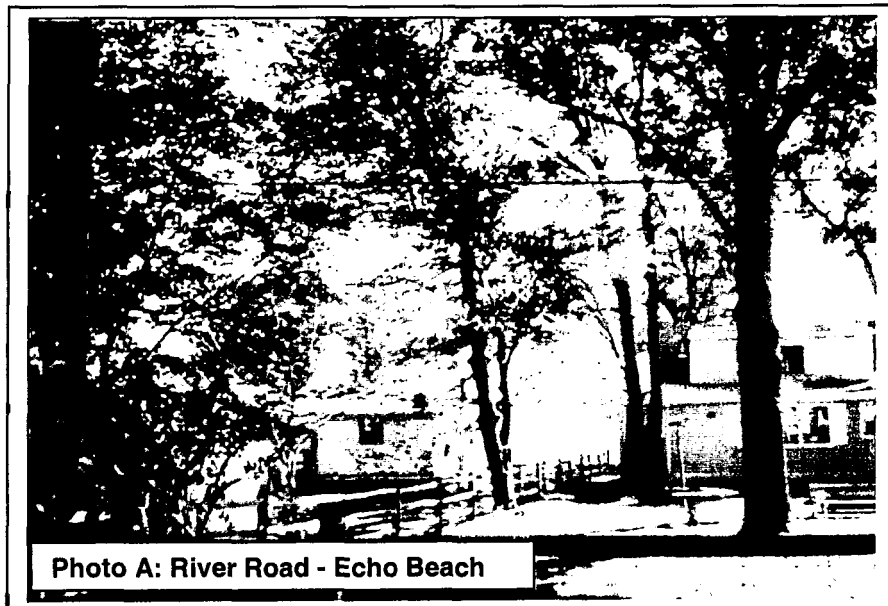
⁶ Bucks County Planning Commission. *Municipal Demographic Profile of Bucks County, PA, Bucks County Proposed Housing Units - 1989-1998*: July 1999.

3.1 Residential Land Uses

This land use plan seeks to maintain and enhance the various residential options available within Bensalem Township. Residential uses are distributed throughout the Township and comprise approximately 32% of Bensalem's total land area. Each residential neighborhood has its unique identity and it's own development pressures. For areas such as Andalusia, there is a need for housing rehabilitation and maintenance. Along the Delaware River waterfront, the Township must balance the potential of the waterfront for mixed-use development along with preserving the existing residential neighborhood. Existing neighborhoods should be protected from incursions by incompatible land uses or changes in density. Bensalem has a diverse stock of housing opportunities including garden apartments, townhouses developments and single-family residences. The Township should strive to continue to encourage a diversified housing stock and provide affordable housing for all income groups.

Delaware River Waterfront Area

Along the Delaware River waterfront are a variety of residential uses. In the southwestern corner of the Township, where Poquessing Creek and the Delaware River meet, is Salem Harbour, an upscale apartment development with a marina and recreational open space. Also near the waterfront is a mix of small close-knit communities such as Torresdale Manor, Cornwells Manor and Echo Beach. Zoned R-1 (12,000 square foot lot minimum), Torresdale Manor and Cornwells Manor provide modest single-family residences. Echo Beach, zoned R-2, is characterized by smaller single-family residence lots of 7,500 square feet.



Between Torresdale Manor and Echo Beach is a large area of estates. Many of these properties were built in the mid- to late-1800s. These properties are zoned R-AA, requiring 1 acre minimum lot size for development. A mix of residential and industrial uses characterizes the Delaware River waterfront. This area offers potential to provide a variety of housing units, both senior citizen and commuter oriented, to take advantage of this resource and its location in the region. Any development of the waterfront must preserve existing residential neighborhoods and their existing character, which contributes to the suburban atmosphere of Bensalem.

Andalusia

North of the Delaware River waterfront area and west of Woodhaven Road is the Andalusia neighborhood. This area is comprised primarily of single-family housing constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Apartment complexes are located on or near Bristol Pike (US Route 13). Most of the residences are single-family and zoned R-2 (7,500 square foot lot minimum). Maintenance of the housing stock in this densely populated area is a primary concern in Andalusia. The Township should continue to dedicate resources to rehabilitation and maintenance, especially through the Community Development Office. As one of the first neighborhoods in the history of the Township, Andalusia offers a special resource – a look at the origins and history of the growth and development of Bensalem

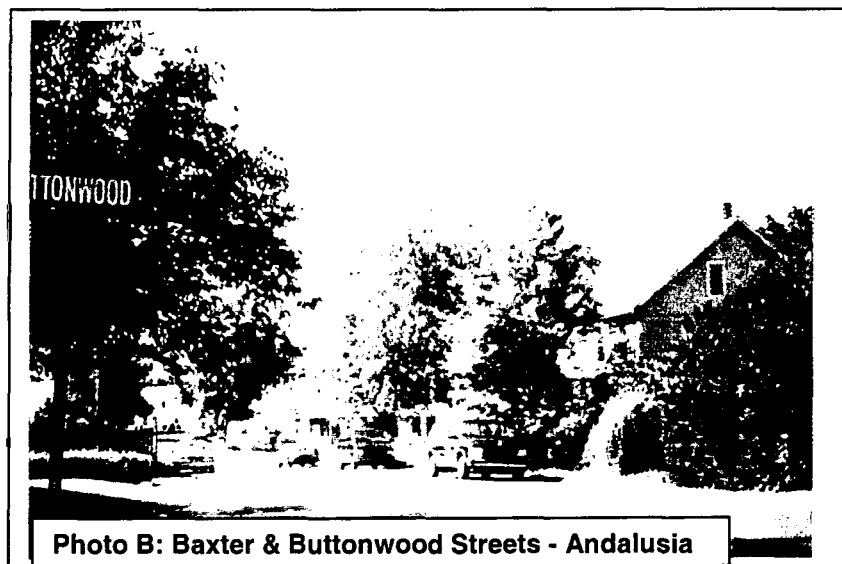


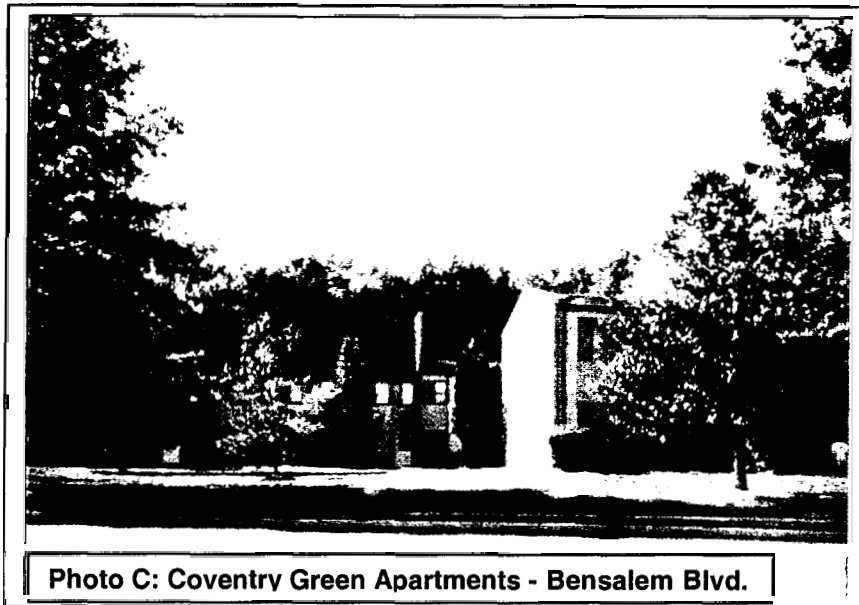
Photo B: Baxter & Buttonwood Streets - Andalusia

Cornwells Heights / Eddington

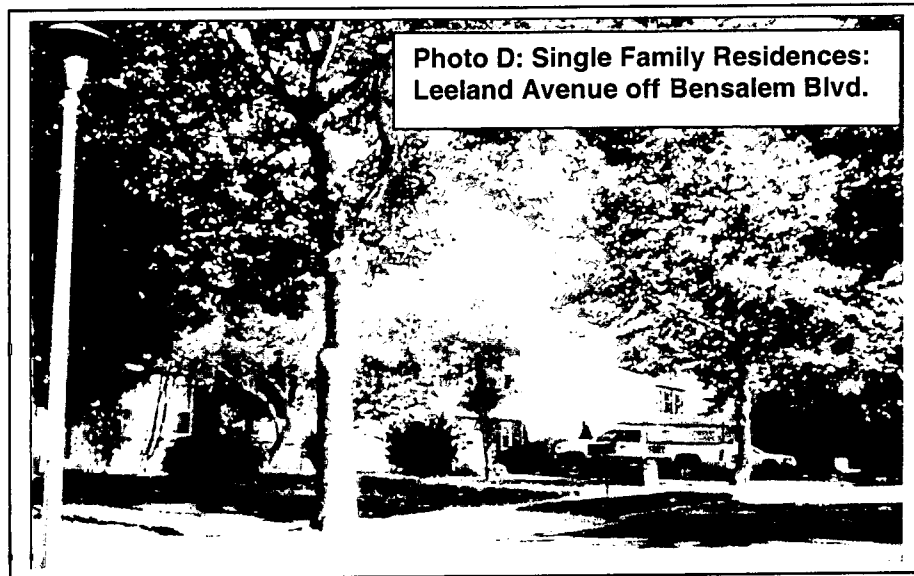
Bristol Pike, Street Road and Hulmeville Road generally define this area. In addition, properties south of the Bensalem Country Club between the Poquessing Creek and Hulmeville Road are part of this neighborhood. To the east of Hulmeville Road, the residential zoning is primarily R-2. Many of the Cornwells Heights residences were built in the 1920s and 1930s. Newer residential subdivisions, also zoned R-2, are located to the west of Hulmeville Road.

Glen Ashton / Hulmeville Road Area

The extreme eastern portion of the Township, east of Bensalem Boulevard, is the Glen Ashton Farms Development. This along with residential development on the west side of Bensalem Boulevard was constructed, in part, in the 1950s. These lots are generally zoned R-A-1, requiring a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet. Just north of Glen Ashton Farms is Bensalem Village, a townhouse development east of Bensalem Boulevard.



Between Hulmeville Road and Bensalem Boulevard are a variety of single-family and townhouse developments, interspersed among the various industrial and commercial office parks located throughout the area. Two mobile home parks – Top Ridge and Terry's Trailer Park – are located on the south side of Gibson Road between Hulmeville Road and Bensalem Boulevard. This area offers a variety of housing options, reflecting the more recent development as opposed to area of the Township to the south and west.



Belmont Hills / Neshaminy Valley / Salem Farm

The northern tier of the Township has evolved into a mix of residential uses. The Salem Point neighborhood -- located in the northeast area of Bensalem -- is primarily single-family residences zoned R-1 and R-2. A few parcels in the area -- one at the intersection of Bristol Road and Hulmeville Road and the other along Neshaminy Creek near Hulmeville Road -- have been zoned R-11, which includes single-family residences but the Zoning Ordinance states it is designed to accommodate the Township's Fair Housing share.

West of Hulmeville Road and north of Bristol Road are the Neshaminy Valley and Belmont Hills neighborhoods. Neshaminy Valley Village is a very large townhouse development. Single-family residences are generally located in the Belmont Hills area, with minimum lot sizes ranging from 7,500 square feet to one-half acre. Apartment developments are scattered throughout the area, with larger properties such as Country Light Villas and Chalets located near the Neshaminy Creek closer to Belmont Hills.

Photo E: East Drive – Neshaminy Valley Village



Philadelphia Park / Street Road Area

West of Hulmeville Road, across Street Road to Poquessing Creek and the SEPTA railroad right-of-way are a series of residential neighborhoods interspersed with various commercial and industrial uses, most prominently Philadelphia Park Racetrack. To the east of the racetrack are residential areas zoned R-1, R-2, R-11 (20,000 square foot lot minimum) and R-22 (12,000 square foot lot minimum). Quaker Ridge is zoned R-11. These areas are intended to accommodate the Township's fair housing share while preserving open space and environmental resources.

Eddington Gardens and Nottingham Village are neighborhoods west of Street Road on the eastern side of Lincoln Highway (US Route 1) providing single-family residences in R-2 zoning districts. This is also the case in the Linconia Park neighborhood on the west side of Lincoln Highway. Apartment complexes are located on or near Street Road and Lincoln Highway. The Penn Valley Mobile Home Park is located on Old Lincoln Highway.

Trevose / Neshaminy Falls

At the northern end of the Township, east of Brownsville Road and south of Bristol Road is the Trevose section. Most of the structures were constructed in the early 1900s as summer homes for Philadelphians vacationing near the falls of Neshaminy Creek. Those homes have been converted to permanent dwelling units. The Neshaminy Falls neighborhood shares similar characteristics.

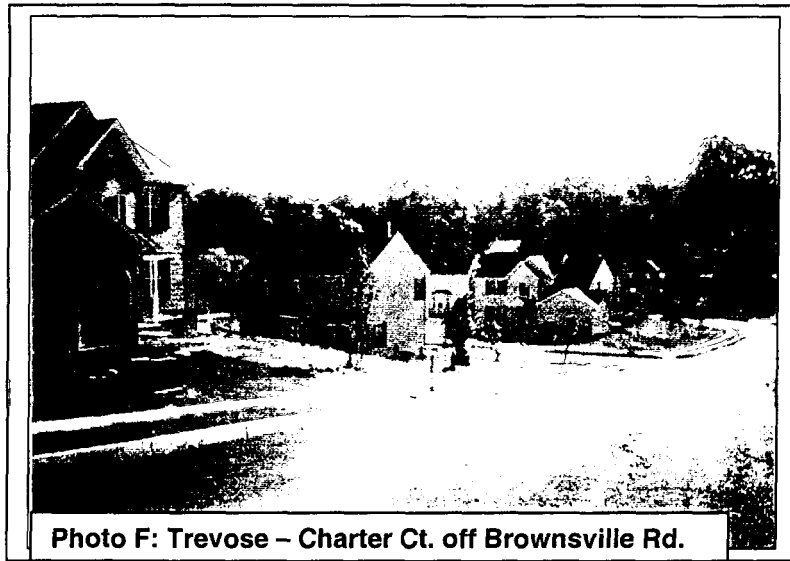


Photo F: Trevoise – Charter Ct. off Brownsville Rd.

Most of the residential development is single-family units zoned R-2, with a mix of older homes and newer subdivisions just off Brownsville road near the Trevoise SEPTA Railroad Station. Larger lot single-family residences can also be found near the Trevoise Station. Until the mid-1960s, residential development was almost exclusively single-family units. With the installation of water and sewer lines throughout the Township, multi-family housing and townhouse development increased dramatically through the 1980s. The 1990s have seen a focus on larger lot single-family residential development, taking into account fewer developable parcels and preserving open space, among other concerns.

The focus of residential land use and zoning should be on providing a variety of housing types, especially affordable housing, and to preserve existing land use patterns. Where vacant land is available, the Township should consider allowing for the development of senior and age-restricted housing to provide for the needs of a growing older population. The Delaware River waterfront also provides an untapped resource for future residential and mixed-use development. Preservation of existing neighborhoods, including rehabilitation efforts by the Township and consistency of zoning, are necessary to preserve the suburban character that is prevalent in the many neighborhoods that make up Bensalem Township.

3.2 Commercial Land Uses

Bensalem has developed as a commercial crossroads of the lower Bucks County and metropolitan Philadelphia region. Benefiting from the location of several key highways, major office and retail centers have developed in the Township. These centers have contributed positively to the growth of Bensalem. As Bucks County's largest municipality, the Township will continue to play a role in the growth and development of the region. Bensalem should continue to encourage commercial growth along appropriate commercial corridors, such as Street Road, in a way that future design considerations take into account existing scale of development. Future commercial development should not overwhelm existing infrastructure and resources.

Street Road (State Route 132) has been established as the center of strip commercial development in Bensalem. The type of retail and other commercial development ranges from smaller neighborhood oriented shops to larger strip shopping centers with regionally and nationally recognized chain stores. In addition, there are vacant parcels along Street Road that are zoned for commercial development. Future development should be at a similar scale to surrounding existing land uses. The Township should review the several zoning districts along Street Road and address potential inconsistencies to allow for streamlined development along this critical commercial corridor.

The Bensalem Square Shopping Center is located on Knights Road near the Philadelphia border. Boulevard Plaza is a smaller neighborhood oriented strip shopping center located on Bensalem Boulevard. At the intersection of Bristol and Hulmeville Roads is the Village Center Mart. Directly across the street is the new Bensalem Crossing Shopping Center, designed to service the needs of the residential developments in the northern and central sections of the Township.

Other strip shopping centers include the Gateway Shopping Center and Neshaminy Square Shopping Center in the northern section of Bensalem. The Crossroads Shopping Center is located on Bristol Pike and Street Road near the Eddington SEPTA Railroad Station. The Bristol Pike features a variety of neighborhood oriented commercial and retail outlets.

Bensalem has seen the development of malls and major shopping centers in recent years. The largest of these is the Neshaminy Mall, located just south of US Route 1, near the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The Neshaminy Mall first opened in 1968, was renovated in 1995 and expanded in 1998. The mall has 120 retail stores, including national anchor stores, totaling over one million square feet of retail space, and a 24-screen movie theater.

Photo G: Neshaminy Mall



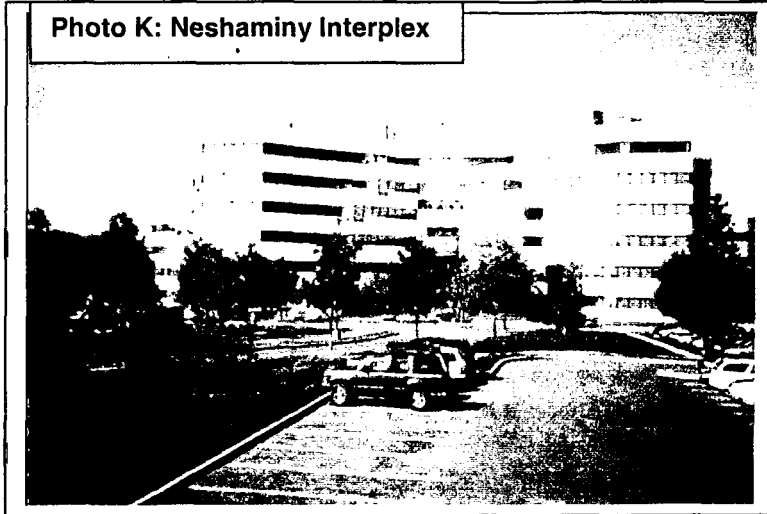
There are two other major shopping malls in Bensalem: Market Place at Neshaminy, adjacent to the Neshaminy Mall; and Woodhaven Mall, located on Bristol Pike and Woodhaven Road.

The 1988 Comprehensive Plan discusses the construction and development of hotels and motels within Bensalem Township. This was seen as a result of the Township having access to major regional highway systems, connecting major business centers throughout the Northeastern US. Many hotels and motels have been constructed on major thoroughfares throughout Bensalem Township, including chains such as Holiday Inn, Howard Johnson, Marriott Courtyard, Radisson, Hampton Inn, Comfort Inn and Extended Stay America, among others.

3.3 Office Land Uses

The 1990s have witnessed a significant growth in office space in the Township, transforming Bensalem into a regional business center with several large-scale office parks included among the many business centers. Among the large-scale office parks located in Bensalem include the Neshaminy Interplex located on US Route 1 near the Philadelphia border, as well as the Glenview Corporate Center and Greenwood Office Complex on Street Road near Philadelphia Park Racetrack. The remaining office development is scattered at a number of locations throughout the Township at smaller office centers such as the Neshaminy Professional Center on Bristol Road and other individual sites. The Eastern State School site is being developed into a mixed-use office/commercial complex.

Photo K: Neshaminy Interplex



Office development is an attractive option in developing tax ratables requiring a minimal dedication of municipal services. Bensalem's close proximity to Philadelphia and access to middle and upper Bucks County provides a prime location for future office development, potentially leading to more desirable ratables for the Township.

3.4 Industrial Land Uses

Bensalem has a mix of industrial and light industrial uses scattered throughout the Township. The Delaware River waterfront and State Road served as an area of initial industrial development in Bensalem. Several industrial parks dot State Road, including Woodhaven, Liberty Bell, State Road, Delaware Expressway and Expressway 95 Industrial Parks. The waterfront offers the Township an opportunity to develop a more diverse land use and economic base. Bensalem should encourage mixed uses along the waterfront and not focus exclusively on industrial uses.

As the Township grew, industrial parks were developed in the central and eastern portions of Bensalem. Among these include Knights Road, Bridgewater and Cornwells Industrial Parks. Located in the northwestern section of the Township at Somerton Road, near US Route 1 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike are the Metropolitan and Neshaminy Industrial Parks. These industrial parks provide existing infrastructure for businesses to locate as well as easy access to major highways. Taking advantage of its participation in the Enterprise Zone of Bucks County, the Township should continue to work with business and other agencies to promote Bensalem as a center of light industry and distribution – utilizing existing industrial parks --as well as a regional office center.

3.5 Areas of Potential Development

The 1988 Comprehensive Plan classified "developable land" into two categories: 1) agricultural and vacant land; and 2) underutilized land. As of 1990, agricultural uses make up only 192 acres, fewer than half of the 409 acres identified in the 1988 Plan. Vacant properties comprise 1,633 acres or about 12% of the total land area of the Township.⁷

Bensalem should also look at sites that may qualify as brownfields. Federal and State programs may provide funds to clean up potentially contaminated sites, restoring them to viable commercial uses. As a mature community, the need for Bensalem Township to identify open space for preservation becomes more of a priority. The focus for future development has to be on underutilized parcel, those that may have been developed to some degree, but have not yet fully realized their potential. Several large properties within the Township fit into this category.

Philadelphia Park Racetrack

Located in the heart of Bensalem, this 417-acre property is easily accessible to and from the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Street Road and US Route 1. In 1999, the racetrack received a \$4 million renovation, including new racing simulcast theaters, bars, restaurants and other amenities. Philadelphia Park hosts the State's premier race, the Pennsylvania Derby. This facility is one of the largest taxpayers in the Township.

The 1988 Plan recommended the continuation of the present use. Realizing the potential market value of the property and the economic pressures of the horse racing industry, the Plan recommended the site be considered as a regional convention center or more extensive spectator sports complex. The property is zoned CSD (Convention Stadium District), allowing as conditional uses a convention center or sports complex.

The current zoning does not allow any flexibility with other development, such as offices, hotels, community facilities, etc., permitted in the CSD. In order to provide more options should the current use terminate and the permitted conditional uses prove to not be viable, the zoning should be amended to permit mixed-use development, with the emphasis on commercial uses.

⁷ Bucks County Planning Commission. *Bucks County Continuum – Lower Bucks Region, Land Use Characteristics/Development Trends*: January 1994.

Bensalem Country Club

Located at Hulmeville Road and Brown Avenue, this privately owned 125-acre golf course was noted in the 1988 Plan. In addition to the golf course, the site includes a clubhouse, restaurant and building complex that functions as a commercial facility. The property is currently zoned REC (Recreation District), which permits golf courses, swim clubs, marinas, athletic fields and parks. The Township has determined the property will be preserved as open space and recreation land, even if it ever ceases operating as a private golf course.

Eastern State Hospital

Located along Lincoln Highway (US Route 1), this property is being developed as a mixed-use facility, encouraging professional office and commercial uses. Since it is located near the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Street Road, the Township should pay close attention to the extent of development and the long-term effects on traffic in the surrounding area and the impact on existing infrastructure. The Township should also encourage the design to be on a scale similar with other local commercial office complexes in Bensalem.

State-Owned Properties

The State of Pennsylvania owns several large properties within the Township have significant development potential. The State is considering selling the Youth Development Center (YDC), located off Neshaminy Boulevard, to a private developer or to the Veterans Administration for another institutional use. The neighboring State Police barracks may also be sold. Each of these properties will create pressure on the service systems of the Township if they are developed to their maximum potential. Given the significant retail development in the area, the sites are suited for mixed use development, including professional offices and age-restricted housing options such as assisted living and continuing care retirement communities, especially since the need for such facilities in Bensalem. The Township should encourage future developers to include an open space component in their development in order to ease pressure on the existing infrastructure and help expand the park and recreation system.

4.0 CIRCULATION

Throughout its history, Bensalem has served as the focal point of the region's circulation system. As far back as the end of the 17th Century, Street and Bristol Roads were constructed as part of William Penn's rectangular grid system for Lower Bucks County. With the addition of ferries across the Delaware River, the area around what is now the Eddington section of the Township provided access to several towns in the area. The 19th Century brought about the development of rail transportation with the Philadelphia-Trenton Railroad in 1835, followed by the Pennsylvania Railroad providing service to New York. The railroads spurred the development of industries and communities along the Delaware River. With the 1920s came the automobile and construction of the Lincoln Highway (US Route 1). This was a precursor to the post-World War II period and the explosive growth that followed.

Bensalem has been able to grow because its circulation system was able to accommodate development. As the Township reaches the level of a more mature community, the maintenance of an efficient circulation system is essential to positive growth. Although the automobile has been the primary focus of the Township's circulation system, roadways are not the only aspect of circulation. Mass transit options, bikeways and other pathways are some the alternatives to be explored in order to provide more efficient circulation and transportation within Bensalem.

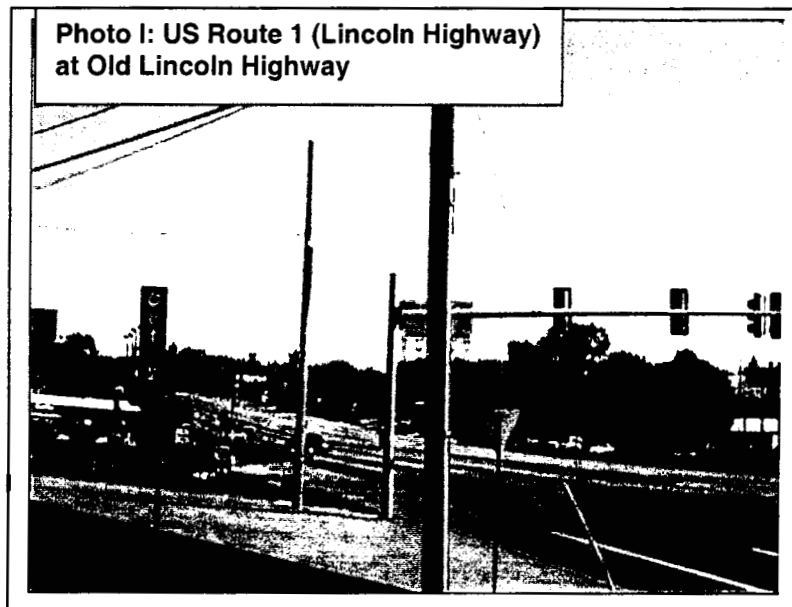
4.1 Classification of Streets

Streets, as defined in the Bensalem Township Zoning Ordinance, are "public or private right-of-ways used or intended to be used for passage or travel by motor vehicles or pedestrians, and to provide access to abutting properties, which will provide for a continuous road system."⁸ Existing and proposed streets, roads and highways within the Township are classified according to their traffic carrying function and are identified on the Circulation Map.

Expressways

These are limited access highways that connect Bensalem Township with other parts of the Philadelphia metropolitan area and points beyond, including the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Interstate 276), Interstate 95, US Route 1 (Lincoln Highway) and Woodhaven Road (State Route 63).

⁸ Bensalem Township Zoning Code: Chapter 232-6.

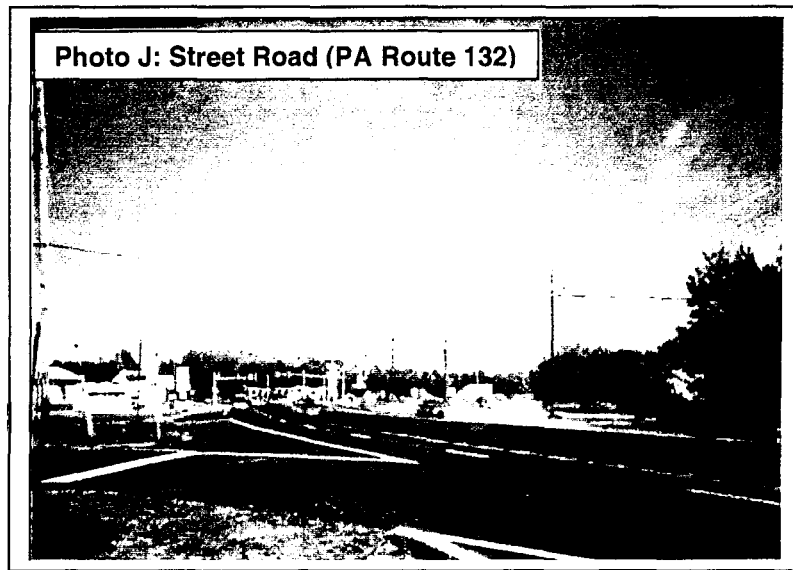


Pennsylvania Turnpike Interchange 28 is located in the Township, allowing traffic access to US Route 1 and Street Road (State Route 132). Both Interstate 95 and US Route 1 traverse through Bensalem in a north-south direction, providing access to Philadelphia to the south and Trenton and points north. Woodhaven Road (State Route 63) provides access from the southern section of the Township to north Philadelphia.

Major Arterials

These roadways provide direct connections between residential neighborhoods and the commercial and industrial centers of Bensalem. In addition, major arterials connect to limited access roads. Major arterials are generally classified as having a 100-foot wide right-of-way, including Street Road, Knights Road (from Street Road to Poquessing Creek) and Rock Hill Drive.

Street Road traverses the Township from the State Road north to Lower Southampton Township. There are many strip shopping centers and office complexes along Street Road. Rock Hill Drive provides access from US Route 1 and Old Lincoln Highway to the Neshaminy Mall area.



Minor Arterials

These thoroughfares serve as connectors between major arterials. They are generally located as to surround neighborhoods and handle external traffic movements to provide connections to major facilities in the Township. Minor arterials have an 80-foot wide right-of-way. These are indicated on the Circulation Map and include Bristol Road, Old Lincoln Highway, Hulmeville Road, Bristol Pike (US Route 13) and State Road.

Collector Roads

These roads are designed to collect local traffic to primary and secondary thoroughfares. Collector roads are intended to discourage through traffic in residential areas and encourage the use of highways as well as major and minor arterials within the Township. Collector roads, listed below, have a 60-foot wide right-of-way:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| ▪ Bensalem Boulevard | ▪ Bridgewater Road |
| ▪ Tennis Avenue from State Road to Bristol Pike | ▪ Mechanicsville Road |
| ▪ Station Avenue | ▪ Gibson Road |
| ▪ Park Avenue | ▪ Neshaminy Boulevard |
| ▪ Byberry Road | ▪ Trevoise Road |
| ▪ Knights Road from Street Road to Galloway Road | ▪ Brownsville Road |
| ▪ Richlieu Road | ▪ Rock Hill Drive |
| ▪ Galloway Road | |

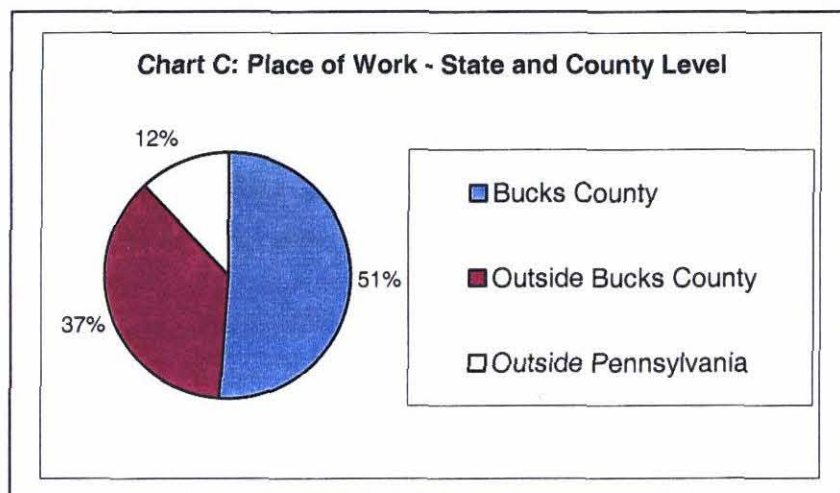
Local Streets

All other streets and roads within Bensalem Township are classified as local streets. They are specifically designed to provide access to individual properties and to discourage through traffic movements. The right-of-way maximum is 50 feet wide.

As the Township plans future development, an assessment of road capacity along minor arterials and collector roads should be made. Where infrastructure improvements are deemed necessary for public safety and long-term economic growth, the Township should work with County, State and Federal agencies to obtain funding for transportation infrastructure improvements. Although these improvements may initially focus on vehicular traffic, Bensalem should research opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle access. A particular need is to create connections, where possible, between the Township's park and recreation areas and the surrounding neighborhoods.

4.2 Commuter Data

According to 1990 US Census data, a majority of Bensalem residents work in Pennsylvania and Bucks County, as noted on **Chart C** below.

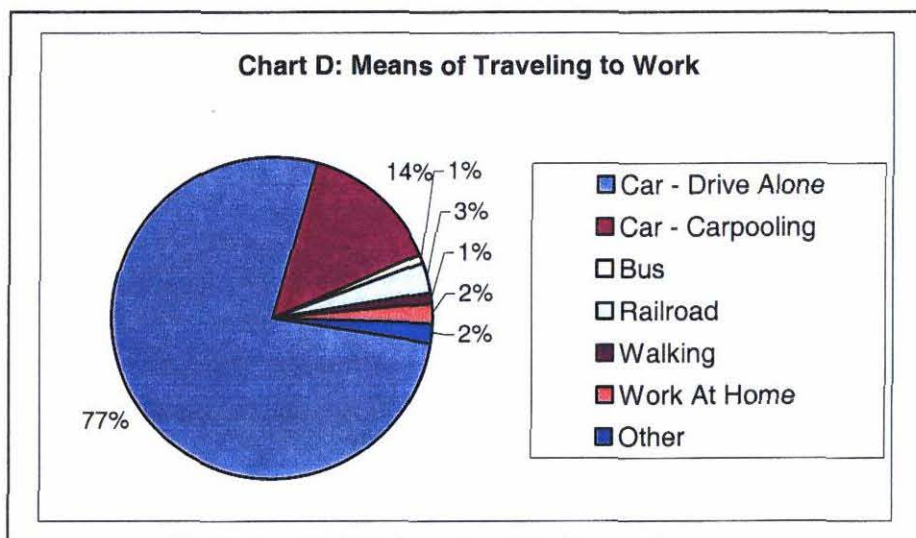


As shown on **Table 3** below, the vast majority – 92.6 percent – of the Township's workforce is employed in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area, encompassing Philadelphia and its neighboring suburban counties in southeastern Pennsylvania and along the Delaware River in southwestern New Jersey.

Table 3: Place of Work – Metropolitan Statistical Area 1990 US Census Data	
PLACE OF WORK	PERCENTAGE
Philadelphia	26.4%
Other Areas of Philadelphia MSA	66.2%
Outside Philadelphia MSA	7.4%

Table 3 illustrates that roughly one-quarter of Bensalem residents commute to Philadelphia for employment. Most of the remaining residents work in other communities throughout the Philadelphia metropolitan area, including Bensalem. According to 1990 US Census data, about one-quarter of residents work in the Township.

The vast majority of Bensalem residents commute to work by automobile. As illustrated on **Chart D**, most commuters drive alone to work as opposed to carpooling or using mass transit.



Although many Bensalem residents can easily access various bus lines and commuter railroad stations, most choose to use their cars to commute to work. Fifty-eight percent of Bensalem residents require 30 minutes or less to commute to work.⁹ Only 6% require at least one hour or more to travel to work.¹⁰

⁹ 1990 US Census data.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Over 70% of Bensalem residents depart for work between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.,¹¹ resulting in a large usage of the Township's circulation system. This does not take into account children being transported to school, which increases the burden on the Township road network.

4.3 Mass Transit Options

Bensalem Township has a series of mass transit options that provide residents the opportunity to utilize public transportation to get to Philadelphia and other locations throughout the region. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) provides railroad and bus service through the Township. There are four commuter railroad stops on two railroad lines as well as six bus routes traversing the Township.

Commuter Rail

Two SEPTA commuter railroad lines run through Bensalem. The R3 West Trenton line, connecting Central Philadelphia and West Trenton, NJ makes two stops in the Township – at the Trevoise and Neshaminy Falls stations. The R7 Trenton Line, connecting Center City Philadelphia and Trenton, NJ also makes two stops in Bensalem – at the Cornwells Heights and Eddington stations.

□ R3 West Trenton Line

The Neshaminy Falls station is located at Bristol Road and Linden Street. Commuter parking is located on site and the station is handicap accessible. A typical commute to Center City Philadelphia takes approximately 45 to 50 minutes. Bus connections are available at the station.

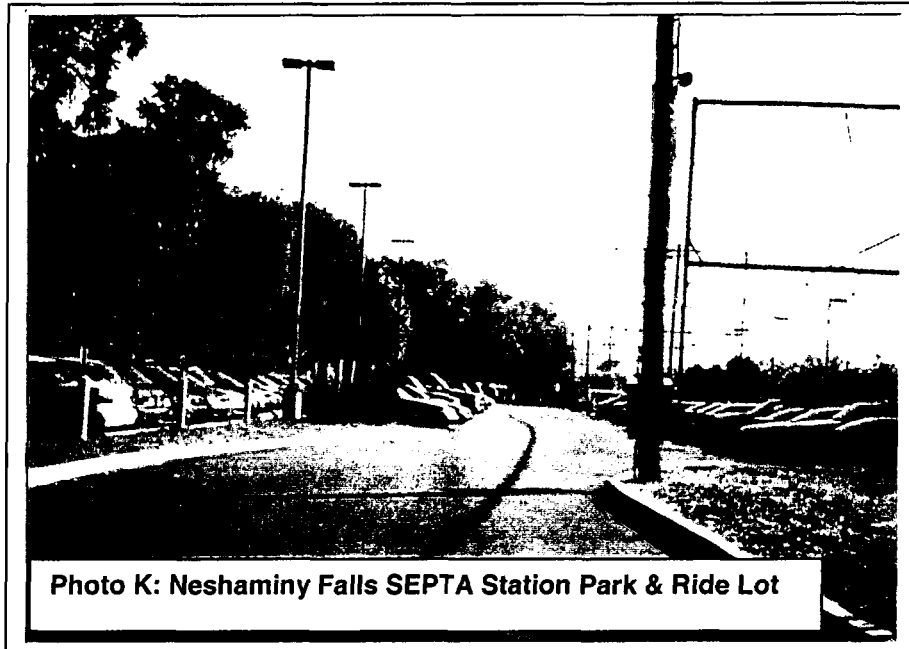
The Trevoise station is located south of the Neshaminy Falls station, at Ridge and Boundbrook Avenues. There is a commuter parking lot available at the site. The commute to Center City Philadelphia takes approximately 45 minutes.

□ R7 Trenton Line

The Eddington Station is located at Street and Dunks Ferry Roads. No commuter parking lot is provided in the immediate area. A typical commute between the Eddington station and Center City Philadelphia take approximately 30 minutes. SEPTA Bus Routes 66 and 129 stop at the station.

¹¹ Ibid.

The Cornwells Heights station is located off Station Avenue near Bristol Park. A commuter parking lot is located nearby, with access from Interstate 95, Woodhaven Road and Station Avenue. A typical commute between the Cornwells Heights station and Center City Philadelphia takes approximately 25 to 30 minutes. SEPTA Bus Routes 66 and 129 stop at the station.



□ **AMTRAK**

AMTRAK provides limited service from the Cornwells Heights station. On weekdays, trains to New York depart four times on weekday mornings, while one train departs on weekends. From New York, AMTRAK makes seven stops on weekdays to allow passengers to disembark. On weekends, the train stops one time at Cornwell Heights. Traveling north, AMTRAK and New Jersey Transit connections may be made at Trenton. To the south, AMTRAK connections may be made at the 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. This linkage provides an opportunity for residents and businesses to utilize a mass transit link to New York without having to travel to Philadelphia and Trenton.

Commuter Bus Service

SEPTA provides six bus lines with service through Bensalem Township. Neshaminy Mall is the focal point of the bus service, with five of six bus lines making stops at the mall.

- ❑ Route 14: Philadelphia – Middletown Township/Oxford Valley Mall
- ❑ Route 58: Lower Southampton Township – Bensalem/Neshaminy Mall
- ❑ Route 127: Trenton – Middletown Township/Oxford Valley Mall
- ❑ Route 128: Bristol – Middletown Township/Oxford Valley Mall
- ❑ Route 129: Philadelphia/Torresdale – Bristol/Levittown
- ❑ Route 130: Middletown Township/Oxford Valley Mall – Bensalem/Neshaminy Mall

SEPTA has attempted to address mass transit access for significant portions of the Township. Besides the Neshaminy Mall, public transit provides access to several industrial parks scattered throughout the Township and commercial areas along Street Road. State Road, which parallels the Delaware River waterfront and is located south of Interstate 95, has many industrial and residential areas that do not have easily accessible mass transit options.

Given the limited capacity of parking space at the rail commuter lots, and in the case of the Eddington station no parking at all, the Township should encourage the use of bus lines, paratransit options such as van/car pooling, or a combination of both to improve access to railroad stations and alleviate congestion. A study of areas underserved by mass transit should be done to determine potential demand for such services. Bus lines do not service many of the industrial parks along State Road and Street Road. Residential areas east of Street Road and south of the Pennsylvania Turnpike do not have convenient access to mass transit options.

4.4 Transportation Improvement Projects

Pennsylvania Turnpike / Interstate 95 Interchange

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission is studying a proposed interchange between the Turnpike and Interstate 95. When Interstate 95 was completed in 1969, no direct connection between the two highways was completed. This has resulted in increased congestion on several of Bensalem Township's roads, most notably Street Road and US Route 1, as motorists attempted to make the connection between these two superhighways. The objectives of the current project include improving the linkage between the two superhighways and reducing the amount of traffic on local roads, attempting to improve the quality of life in the surrounding communities, including Bensalem Township.

Several alternatives have been explored, including no-build, additional mass transit and a combination of local road improvements, high occupancy vehicle lanes and trip reduction strategies. The only alternative that meets the Turnpike Commission's objectives was to widen the Turnpike from four to six lanes, build a new interchange at Interstate 95, add a new toll plaza and build a new bridge across the Delaware River connecting to the New Jersey Turnpike.

The placement of new toll plazas would have the most direct impact on the Township. The Turnpike Commission has offered two split toll plaza plans, both of which would be located within Bensalem Township. The Split Toll Plaza East Plan would be located between Galloway Road and Hulmeville Road. Local residents on the northern side of the Turnpike, including residents of the Longmeadow Apartments and the Woods of Neshaminy Valley complex, have expressed concerns about the impacts of this plan on their neighborhood. The other alternative, located just west of Richlieu Road and east of Galloway Road, has less of an impact on residential areas but a potential detrimental impact on wetlands.

The economic impact study highlights Exit 28, the only interchange within Bensalem Township, as an emerging business location. With the Eastern State School being developed for mixed-use commercial and professional office, the Interchange 95 project offers an opportunity to relieve some of the pressure at the Exit 28 interchange and allow for ample opportunity to permit this new development.

Other Ongoing Improvement Projects

Bensalem Township has several ongoing or planned projects that are expected to have a positive impact on traffic circulation throughout the area. The Transportation Planning Division of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, a nine county, two state regional planning consortium, has developed a short term Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Required by Federal law (ISTEA and TEA-21), TIP is the regionally agreed upon list of priority projects. The projects are multi-modal, potentially including bicycle, pedestrian and freight related projects, as well as more traditional highway and public transit projects.

Many Bensalem Township projects have qualified for TIP funding, covering the period 1999 through 2002. Funding can be from Federal, State and local sources, or a combination thereof.

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□ *Bristol Road Improvements*

Traffic signals and left turn lanes are to be added to 7 intersections from Old Lincoln Highway to Hulmeville Road (State Route 513). The signals will be upgraded and interconnected with a closed loop.

□ *US Route 1 (Lincoln Highway)*

This project consists of bridge deck rehabilitation to about 8 structures and interchange upgrades in Bensalem and Middletown Townships. The Bensalem portion of the project includes the area from the Middletown Township boundary to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

□ *New Falls Road*

Located in the eastern section of the Township along Neshaminy Creek, this project involves the rehabilitation of the bridge deck. The 4-lane width with minimal shoulders will remain the same. This bridge connects Bensalem Boulevard to Bristol and Middletown Townships.

□ *Bristol Pike (US Route 13)*

This project involves installing a closed loop traffic signal system along this heavily traveled road in the southern section of the Township. The project area includes approximately 16 intersections in both Bensalem and Bristol Townships. The improvements are anticipated to accommodate the additional traffic expected during the rehabilitation of Interstate 95.

□ *Interstate 95*

Work proposed for this interstate highway includes preventative maintenance and restoration work along Interstate 95 in Bensalem and Bristol Townships. The Bensalem portion of Interstate 95 affected by the project is from Street Road (Exit 25) north to the Bristol Township boundary. A study will be conducted on the Street Road interchange, which has functioned poorly. Various issues include vehicles queuing on the ramps, significant backups on Interstate 95 and traffic signal problems. The study will provide recommendations to alleviate the concerns noted. Eventually, the overpass above Interstate 95 will be replaced.

These projects range from rehabilitation of major highways to the renovation and expansion of commuter parking lots. Within the Township, traffic signals at key intersections are in need of improvement to provide for the safe and efficient circulation of both vehicles and pedestrians. Many of the Township's bridges are either falling into disrepair or are not able to accommodate local circulation needs. Bensalem Township has been successful in securing funding for key transportation needs. This success has and will continue to be necessary in order to maintain an efficient circulation system.

5.0 HOUSING

In conjunction with the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, Bensalem Township has prepared a *Fair Housing Plan*. The purpose of that plan is to determine the existence of unfair housing practices in the Township and seek methods to eliminate any such impediments to fair housing choice. This study is the first of its kind conducted by the Township, an indication of the maturation of the community and its housing stock.

As a mature community, Bensalem has to address the needs of an economically and socially diverse population. The housing goals illustrate the transformation from a community focused on building new housing to one that has more of a need to maintain and enhance existing housing stock. Those goals are as follows:

- ❑ Review the Township's code enforcement program and strengthen elements requiring improvement to protect the quality-of-life and preserve property values.
- ❑ Maintain and enhance existing housing stock, especially in older neighborhoods, through property maintenance regulations and rehabilitation initiatives.
- ❑ Increase the viability and availability of housing for older residents, making it easier for them to remain in Bensalem.

The Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan seeks to preserve the quality-of-life that Bensalem residents have come to expect of their community. Given the declining amount of vacant land to develop and the various needs of the community, large-scale construction of affordable housing and senior housing is not a certainty. Alternatives must be developed to provide quality affordable housing in Bensalem.

5.1 Housing Unit Characteristics¹²

There are 22,713 dwelling units in Bensalem Township. This represents an increase of 9.4 percent over the 20,766 dwelling units reported in 1980. Despite the near double-digit growth, this increase is significantly less than the 20.9 percent growth of dwelling units throughout Bucks County.

Virtually all of the housing in Bensalem Township was built after 1939. Only 5.3 percent of the dwelling units were built before World War II, less than the Bucks County average of 12.8 percent but definitely similar to neighboring Bristol, Lower Southampton and Middletown Townships. As noted on **Table 4**, most of the housing was developed during the post-World War II years.

¹² Bucks County Planning Commission. *Municipal Demographic Profile of Bucks County*. July 1999.

Table 4: Housing Units – Year Built			
	Before 1939	1940-1969	1970 to date
Bensalem Twp.	5.3%	42.0%	46.5%
Bristol Twp.	6.2%	80.7%	13.1%
Lower Southampton Twp.	5.6%	60.6%	33.9%
Middletown Twp.	4.5%	52.6%	42.9%
Bucks County	12.8%	45.5%	41.7%

Single-family residences make up the majority of housing units in Bensalem. Over half of the 22,713 units are either attached or detached single-family residences. Bensalem has about 8,700 multi-family units, about twenty (20) percent of the total available in Bucks County. **Table 5** illustrates the diversity of housing units available in the Township.

Table 5: Housing Units – Structural Characteristics		
HOUSING UNIT TYPE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Single-Family Detached	9,172	39.4%
Single-Family Attached	3,725	16.4%
Multi-Family (2-4 Units)	1,044	4.6%
Multi-Family (5+ Units)	7,666	33.8%
Mobile Homes	904	4.0%
Other	202	0.8%
TOTAL	22,713	100.0%

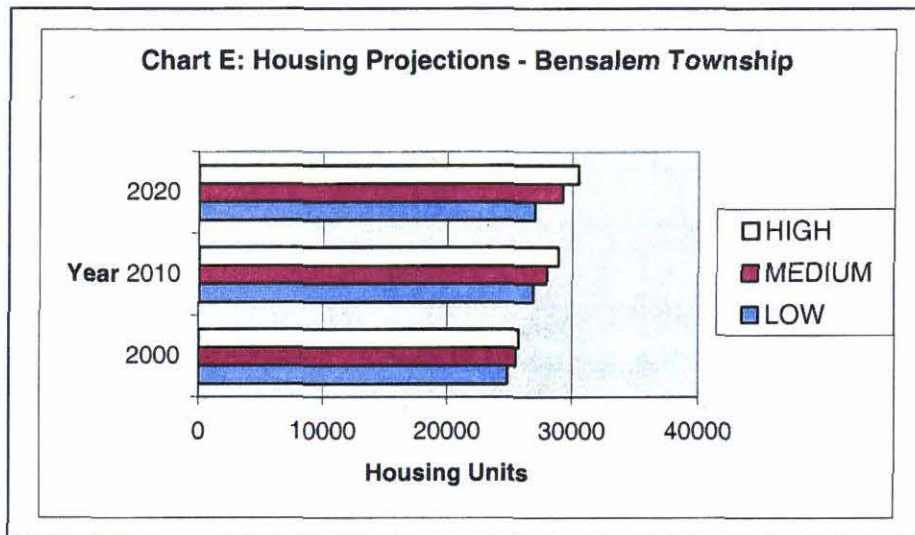
Almost half of the housing units have three or more bedrooms, as opposed to over two-thirds of the housing units throughout Bucks County. The housing in Bensalem reflects the diverse needs of the community, which has matured to the point that it is seeking to preserve its housing stock and quality-of-life, rather than an area expecting a large wave of new housing construction to address the Township's concerns.

5.2 Housing Tenure

There is more of a balance in the number of owners and renters in Bensalem than throughout Bucks County as a whole. The amount of owner occupied units decreased slightly from 1990 to 2000 US Census data. In 2000, the percentage of owner-occupied units was 58.1%, a decline from 59.8% in 1990. The percentage of renters increased from 40.2% in 1990 to 41.9% in 2000, still exceeding the Bucks County average.

5.3 Projecting Housing Development

Steady growth in housing demand is expected for Bensalem Township during the next 30 years. **Chart E** illustrates the expected demand based on high, medium and low population projections.



Even anticipating low population growth and housing demand, there is expected to be a demand for 26,980 housing units by 2020, an 18.8 percent increase from 1990. Given the Township's effort to emphasize single-family housing over multi-family development and the desire to preserve open space in Bensalem, the focus must become rehabilitation, in-fill development and maintenance of existing housing stock. This expected desire for housing might also include senior citizen and age-restricted housing, including assisted living and continuing care facilities, as well as low to moderate income housing units.

6.0 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

6.1 Labor Force and Employment Data

The growth rate of Bensalem's labor force has slowed down along with the leveling off of population. The 1990 US Census data showed the Township labor force totaled 31,458, a decline of 1.1 percent from the 1980 US Census total of 31,749. Furthermore, estimates indicate a further decline of 1.1 percent from 1990 through 1998.¹³

The slight decline in Bensalem's labor force is not reflective of Lower Bucks County or the county as a whole. During the 1980s, the labor force grew at a rate of almost 13 percent, and a growth is estimated at 8.6 percent during the 1990s. Even in Lower Bucks, the most developed section of the county, the growth rate of the labor force during the 1990s has been 2.4 percent.¹⁴

The educational attainment level of the labor force has improved dramatically since 1980. According to 1990 statistics, 79.9 percent of the Bensalem labor force has a high school education, a significant increase from the 72.4 percent reported in 1980. The percentage of the labor force with at least 4 years of college has increased from 17.8 percent in 1980 to 21.8 percent in 1990.¹⁵

The educational attainment of the Bensalem labor force is comparable to neighboring Lower Southampton and Middletown Townships, as well as the county as a whole. Table 6 illustrates the comparative level of educational attainment among the surrounding municipalities.

Table 6: Labor Force Educational Attainment			
MUNICIPALITY	High School Graduate	Bachelor's Degree or higher	Graduate or Professional Degree
Bensalem Twp.	79.9%	21.8%	6.8%
Bristol Twp.	74.4%	8.9%	2.5%
Lower Southampton Twp.	81.8%	20.5%	7.2%
Middletown Twp.	84.9%	26.1%	8.8%
Bucks County	82.9%	24.8%	8.5%

¹³ Bucks County Planning Commission. *Municipal Demographic Profile of Bucks County*. July 1999.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

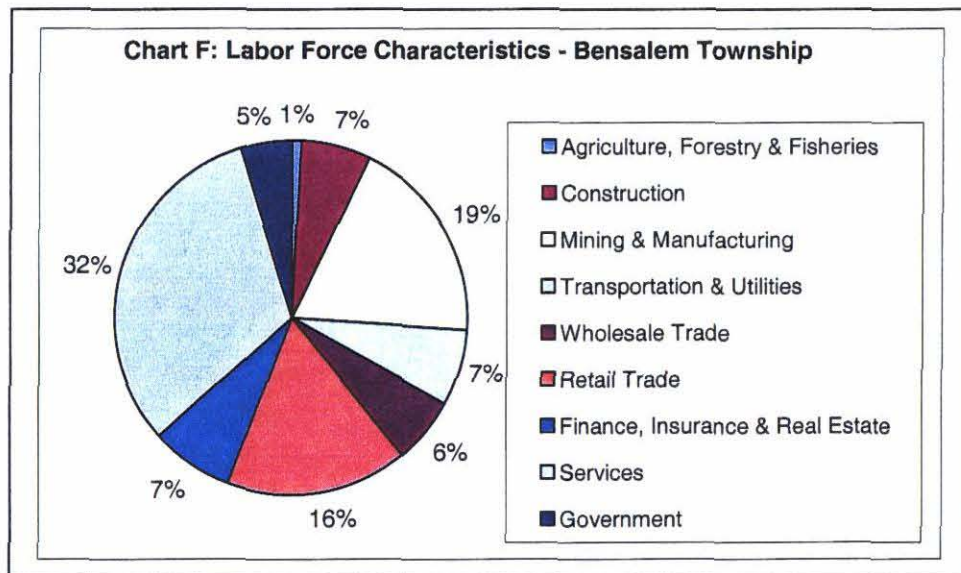
Bensalem's solid education statistics, in concert with its excellent regional location and diverse base of professional offices and other businesses, provides a prime location for employees and employers alike to conduct business in the Township.

Employment

According to 1990 US Census data, 29,821 Bensalem residents are employed. During the 1990s, it is estimated that employment declined 0.2 percent between 1990 and 1998.¹⁶ This slight decline in the labor force is not reflective of Bucks County, which has experienced an increase. Even throughout Lower Bucks, the growth rate of the labor force during the 1990s has been 3.3 percent.¹⁷

Self-employed persons total 1,618 or about 5% of the Township labor force.¹⁸ According to 1998 estimates, unemployment is at 4% percent.¹⁹ This is significant since many economists believe this is a sign of "full employment," when more jobs are available than there are workers to fill them. This fact makes it essential for Bensalem to continue as a desirable location for businesses to operate, providing employment opportunities for residents of the Township and throughout the region.

Chart F illustrates what occupations and trades employ Bensalem residents.



¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ 1990 US Census data.

¹⁹ Bucks County Planning Commission. *Municipal Demographic Profile of Bucks County*. July 1999.

The percentages for Bensalem Township are reflective of the labor force trends throughout Bucks County. Manufacturing occupations make up less than 20% of the labor force, a decline from 25% percent in 1980. "White-collar" positions in services, government, and finance, insurance and real estate comprise over 40% of the labor force, an increase from 35% percent in 1980. Over 20% of Bensalem's employed residents are employed in the wholesale or retail trade sector, about the same percentage as in 1980.²⁰

Employment projections for the year 2000 range from 32,790 to 34,420.²¹ These numbers depend on population trends, but reflect the need for Bensalem to preserve and enhance the quality-of-life that influenced its residents to live in the Township. Job creation and development, whether in a tight labor market or during economic downturns, is dependent on providing an environment that gives businesses the opportunity to compete. In addition, it must provide residents sufficient opportunities for employment and services such as schools, housing, public works, etc.

6.2 Income Data

An examination of income data of Bensalem Township residents reveals that it is generally higher than Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area²² as a whole, but lower than Bucks County, as illustrated on **Table 7**.

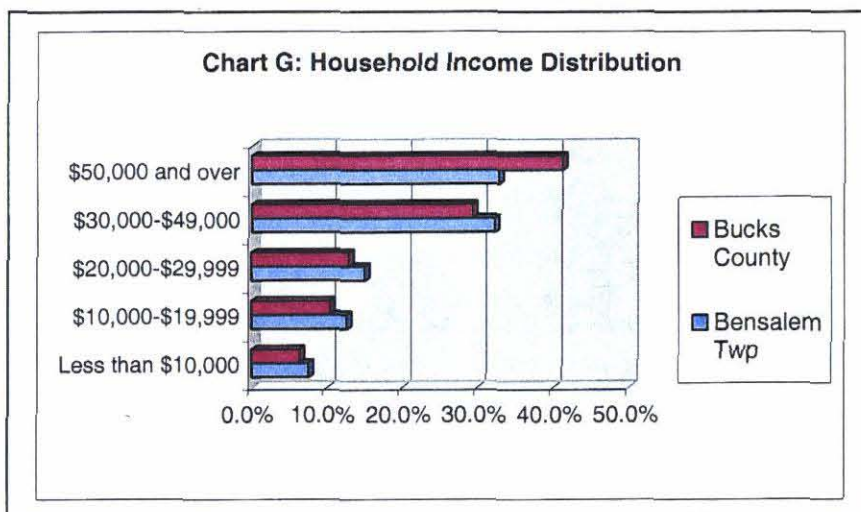
Table 7: Income Comparison			
AREA	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
Bensalem Twp.	\$38,488	\$43,224	\$15,964
Bucks County	\$43,347	\$48,851	\$18,292
Philadelphia Metro Area	\$32,819	\$40,225	\$15,957
Pennsylvania	\$29,069	\$34,856	\$14,068

Bensalem Township is not as affluent as Bucks County as a whole, but over 60% of its households earn more than \$30,000 per year. Fewer than 8% of the Township households earn less than \$10,000 per year. **Chart G** shows the distribution of income levels for Bensalem Township and Bucks County.

²⁰ *Bensalem Township Comprehensive Plan*, page 62, Direction Associates, Inc., January 1988.

²¹ Bucks County Planning Commission. *Municipal Demographic Profile of Bucks County*. July 1999.

²² The Philadelphia Metropolitan Area consists of the City of Philadelphia, the surrounding Pennsylvania counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery, and the New Jersey counties of Burlington, Camden and Gloucester.



Bucks County has a higher percentage of households earning over \$50,000 per year, with over 40% of household in that category. Only 32% percent of Bensalem Township households earn over \$50,000 per year.

6.3 Economic Development

In February 1997, the Bucks County Economic Development Task Force submitted a report and proposal entitled "*A Blueprint for the Future.*" One of the concerns outlined was the over-reliance on efforts at attracting large-scale industrial and manufacturing firms, many of which have left Bucks County. The new challenge is to encourage a mix of industries and commercial ventures in concert with maintaining the commitment to maintaining the County's environmental features and open space.

This commitment goes hand in hand with the desire to revitalize abandoned and underutilized industrial and commercial parcels throughout the County. Bensalem Township has many areas that need such revitalization. As a result, Bensalem is one of the six area municipalities participating in the Bucks County Enterprise Zone.

The purpose of the Enterprise Zone is to increase the quality and quantity of job opportunities within an Enterprise Zone area. Designated areas are provided priority consideration to facilitate identified business investment and job creation opportunities. The Bucks County Enterprise Zone includes Bristol Township, Bristol Borough, Falls Township, Morrisville Borough and Tullytown Borough. The total land area is about 16 square miles and nearly one-third of the County's total labor force resides in the Zone.

Bensalem's portion of the Enterprise Zone includes areas southeast of Interstate 95 and the railroad right-of-way north of Station Avenue and northwest of State Road. This includes Liberty Bell, Delaware Expressway and Expressway Industrial Parks. In addition, State Road Industrial Park, located southeast of State Road, south of America Drive with its western boundary along the Delaware River.

Maintaining and enhancing investment, business and employment opportunities will require the creation of public/private partnerships for economic development and revitalization initiatives. The Bucks County Economic Task Force recommended actions that Bensalem and the other municipalities within the Enterprise Zone should use as a guideline for fostering economic development.

Beyond the Enterprise Zone, Bensalem should aggressively promote its economic resources. The Township has viable commercial areas along Street Road and Bristol Pike. In addition, there are underutilized parcels along Lincoln Highway and Street Road that provide prime locations for mixed-use development. A key component to maximizing economic development is the continued improvement of key roadways. The development of the Pennsylvania Turnpike / Interstate 95 interchange is expected to relieve some of the traffic on local roads that is caused by motorists trying to get to and from the Turnpike and Interstate 95. This project will be of benefit to mixed-use office development in the Township as well as the continued growth of the Bucks County Enterprise Zone.

7.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND UTILITIES

This element focuses on the municipal and educational services provided to the residents of Bensalem Township. The goal of this element is to ensure that the quality of services and facilities is at the highest level possible. Bensalem is serviced by a comprehensive system of services that include fire and police protection, emergency services, public health, public library, water and sewer services, the Bensalem School District and non-public schools in Bensalem Township.

7.1 Public Facilities

Municipal Complex

In 1992, Bensalem Township opened a modern municipal complex located at Hulmeville Road. The site is home to the Township's Administrative and Police Building, Public Works Facility, Emergency Services, Senior Citizens Center and a branch of the Bucks County Library. The facility is handicapped accessible and provides ample parking for employees and visitors. Central Park serves as a central location and gathering place for the Township residents. The goal of the site is to provide active and passive recreation opportunities for all of Bensalem's citizens in a central location. **Section 8.2** outlines the current and proposed facilities for Central Park.

Police Department

A force of 81 officers provides police protection for Bensalem Township. The department utilizes 64 vehicles to patrol and service the Township. All police department operations are centralized at the Bensalem Township municipal complex.

Fire Department

Six fire companies provide fire protection service for Bensalem with seven stations located throughout the Township. Primarily staffed by volunteers, the fire companies are as follows:

<u>FIRE COMPANY</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Cornwells No. 16	2049 Bristol Pike
Eddington No. 28	1444 Brown Avenue
Newport No. 44	5961 Bensalem Boulevard
Newport No. 88	2900 Pasqualone Boulevard
Nottingham No. 65	3420 Street Road
Trevoise No. 4	4900 Street Road
Union No. 37	2067 State Road

The fire companies have joined together to form the Bensalem Township Association of Fire Companies. This allowed each company to make decisions relative to areas of specialization and overall contribution to the Township's fire protection service.

The Bureau of Fire Prevention acts as a liaison between the Township and its fire companies. Responsibilities of the Bureau include enforcement of the Township Fire Code, which includes new building reviews, fire ordinance updates, annual commercial fire inspections and fire cause investigations.

Rescue Squad

Located at the corner of Byberry and Hulmeville Roads, Bensalem Emergency Medical Services (EMS) was established in 1980 as a non-profit volunteer ambulance company to provide service to the Township. Since then, it has become one of the more active ambulance services in Bucks County. The staff consists of a combination of career and volunteer personnel. Bensalem EMS responds to nearly 4,500 calls per year.

Bensalem EMS works closely with the Township and other public agencies to provide emergency services. Two of the local fire companies provide "quick response services" to provide first aid until EMS arrives at the scene. EMS provided the Bensalem Police Department with medical support personnel and automatic external defibrillators for some of their vehicles.

Funding for Bensalem EMS comes from a combination of tax support and donations. The bulk of the funding comes from fee for service income. Tax income only provides 20% to 25% of total operating expenses.

7.2 Educational Resources

Bensalem School District

The Bensalem School District serves the Township's public educational needs. Bensalem schools provide educational services for the entire Township and a portion of Lower Southampton Township, serving a population of nearly 62,000. With an enrollment of nearly 7,300 students, the district is comprised of six elementary schools (grades K-5), three middle schools (grades 6-8) and Bensalem High School (grades 9-12). District students may also attend the Bucks County Vocational-Technical School in Fairless Hills, PA. The schools are located as follows:

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Belmont Hills Elementary School	5000 Neshaminy Boulevard
Russell Strubble Elementary School	4300 Bensalem Boulevard
Benjamin Rush Elementary School	2300 Hulmeville Road
Samuel K. Faust Elementary School	2901 Bellview Drive
Cornwells Elementary School	Hulmeville Road
Valley Elementary School	3100 Donallen Drive
Neil A. Armstrong Middle School	2201 Street Road
Cecilia Snyder Middle School	3330 Hulmeville Road
Robert K. Schaefer Middle School	4951 Central Avenue

Over 20% of the District students are minorities: African-Americans 10.8%, Asians 8% and Hispanics 3.4%. Local revenue provides approximately 75% of funding, with the rest coming from State and local sources.²³

Other Schools

There are a variety of private and charter schools in Bensalem Township. Some are listed below:

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Bensalem Baptist School	3551 Richlieu Road
Bensalem Christian Day School	4300 Hulmeville Road
Cornwells Christian Day School	2284 Bristol Pike
Our Lady of Fatima School	2915 Street Road
St. Charles Borromeo School	1704 Bristol Pike
St. Ephrem School	5340 Hulmeville Road
Trevose Day School	4951 Central Avenue

²³ Philadelphia Inquirer: Report Card on the Schools – 1999.

Holy Ghost Preparatory School, a boys only high school located on Bristol Pike, draws students from throughout the region. De La Salle Vocational School, operated by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, is located at 1265 Street Road.

There is one charter school in the Township. The Mosaica Academy Charter School offers kindergarten through 7th grade education.

7.3 Utilities

Public water and sewer hookups are available throughout Bensalem Township. Major changes have occurred regarding management of the water and sewer systems. On September 1, 1999, the Bensalem Sewer Department was sold to the Bucks County Water & Sewer Authority. As of December 3, 1999, the Bensalem Water Department is now part of the Philadelphia Suburban Water Company. These companies handle all sewer and water emergencies, which were previously the responsibility of the Township.

There are approximately 175 miles of sanitary sewer lines now under the jurisdiction of the Bucks County Water & Sewer Authority. Water lines within Bensalem total approximately 170 miles. About 99% of the Township residents are serviced by these water and sewer connections.²⁴

Continued maintenance of this infrastructure is a key component of economic and physical development of the Township. The sale of the water and sewer departments to larger authorities allows for greater investment by the purchasers and potentially allows the Township to make infrastructure investments that it would otherwise have to spend on water and sewer system improvements. Bensalem Township should determine what level of development the existing water and sewer infrastructure capacity is able to handle without detriment to current residents and businesses within the Township.

²⁴ 1990 US Census data.

8.0 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The purpose of this section is to illustrate that Bensalem Township has been proactive in providing and improving a system of parks, recreation facilities and open space areas for the enjoyment of the community. In 1995, the Township developed an Open Space Plan. With community input, many open space needs were identified as follows:

- ☐ Active recreation
- ☐ Linear parks and greenway
- ☐ Small parks close to more densely populated areas
- ☐ Preservation of critical lands

Bensalem has seen a decline in the amount of land dedicated to agricultural uses as well as diminishing "vacant" land. In addition, parcels along the Neshaminy and Poquessing Creeks are in need of protection from development due to the potential effects of increased stormwater runoff that could be caused by not preserving flood plains.

The creation and preservation of recreation land is also necessary to address quality-of-life concerns. This is especially true in Bensalem, which has the lowest median age in the County, the highest number of residents under 25 years of age, and the highest number of multi-family rental units in the County.

8.1 Open Space Policies

Bensalem Township has taken a proactive role throughout the last decade to address environmental and open space issues. Since the adoption of the 1988 Comprehensive Plan, the Township has drafted other plans including the 1990 Parkland Recreation Plan and the 1996 Open Space Land Acquisitions Plan. Also in 1996, the Township amended its zoning ordinance, adopting new ordinances for to protect critical environmental features, such as floodplains, steep slopes, and woodlands, among other features. The Township also adopted stormwater and tree protection ordinances in 1993.

Among the open space goals outlined in the Open Space Plan are as follows:

- ☐ Protect critical habitats along Poquessing, Neshaminy and Mill Creeks and Delaware River
- ☐ Develop strategies to create greenway corridors throughout Township, including utilizing utility corridors
- ☐ Identify high-risk parcels from being developed

- ☐ Identify parcels that can be protected with non-acquisition based methods or acquired at reduced value
- ☐ Identify properties that can be revitalized or reclaimed
- ☐ Protect wetlands and promote environmentally sound land management strategies

The Bensalem School District has worked with the Township to develop a common philosophy regarding open space, dedicating 307 acres of school district property to open space use and preservation. Bensalem Township has acquired properties for open space preservation, including a 34 acre wooded parcel on Knights Road near the municipal complex.

8.2 Parks and Recreation Facilities

Bensalem has a diverse system of parks located throughout the Township. Most are maintained by the Township Department of Parks and Recreation. In addition, there are 2 county parks and Neshaminy State Park, located along the Delaware River waterfront. The Township also provides residents with summer and winter recreation programs, addressing the needs of all segments of the population – from young children to senior citizens.

Neshaminy State Park

Located along the Delaware River and Neshaminy Creek, Neshaminy State Park provides boating access to the Delaware River and contains the only estuary in the state. The park is located at the intersection of State Road and Dunks Ferry Road. About two-thirds of the 330 acres are located in Bensalem Township.

Among the facilities include 250 marina slips, a 4-mile river walk trail, a swimming pool complex and picnic facilities. A regional location, the Bucks County Planning Commission estimated that the park had approximately 450,000 visitors. On weekdays, the majority of the visitors are from Bensalem.²⁵

Bucks County Parks

The Bucks County Parks Commission maintains 2 smaller parks along the Delaware River waterfront. The Delaware River Access Area offers a boat access ramp, parking and picnic facilities along the Delaware River.

Pen Ryn Park and Mansion is a 15-acre property located along the Delaware River. The Drexel Estate at Pen Ryn has been restored and river frontage is partially accessible. This estate is similar to others along the Delaware River that should be part of a historic preservation effort as well (see **Section 9.0**).

²⁵ *Bensalem Township: Park and Recreation Plan*, Direction Associates, Inc., Spring House, PA, p.18.

Township Parks

There are 24 parks in the Township, ranging from small parcels of less than one acre designed for neighborhood use to larger community parks designed for intense recreational facilities and other outdoor recreation.

There are six parks less than one acre in size.

<u>Park</u>	<u>Facilities</u>
Carter Road Park	Basketball court
Echo Beach Playground	Basketball court, playground
Executive Park	Basketball court, playground, benches
Mayflower Drive Park	Tot lot
Trevose Park – Philadelphia Ave.	Play center, benches
Valley Meadow Drive Park	Tot lot

Several parks are between one and ten acres in size. Although they are generally geared toward neighborhood use, they may offer more comprehensive facilities and special attractions, such as historic sites nearby.

<u>Park</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Facilities</u>
Barthmaier Park	4.5	Basketball court, swing set
Clinton Avenue Park	3.0	Basketball court, play area
Clusters of Berkeley Park	5.0	Half basketball court, 5 tot lots, tennis court
Creekside Park	5.0	Basketball court
Growden Mansion Park	8.0	Soccer field, baseball/softball field
Lin Park	6.0	Basketball courts, baseball field, covered pavilion, playground, parking
Neshaminy Coves Park	8.0	Softball field, playground, benches
Springdale Drive Park	4.0	Baseball/softball field, soccer field, basketball field, hockey court
Trevose Park–Chestnut Ave.	3.5	Baseball/softball field, playground, basketball court, benches, parking
Veterans Park	2.0	Softball field, basketball court, playground, parking
Wayne Turn Park	2.0	Playground
Woodriver Park	2.0	Softball field

Bensalem Township has several parks greater than 10 acres in size. They are scattered throughout the Township, providing varied recreation opportunities, from nature preserves to large-scale athletic fields.

☐ *James Armstrong Memorial Park & Nature Preserve*

This 20-acre park preserves woodlands and wetlands along the Neshaminy Creek. The site includes a hiking trail, bird blind, campfire ring, picnic tables and a parking area.

☐ *Bensalem Central Park*

Located at the municipal complex, this 22-acre site includes playground facilities, a hiking trail with a newly constructed bridge over wetlands, athletic fields, and an amphitheater currently under construction.

☐ *Bensalem Community Park*

Located on Richlieu Road, the newest park is a 40-acre facility will include baseball and soccer fields, basketball courts and a hockey rink. The property was previously school district land preserved as open space.

☐ *Washington Lane Park*

Located on Hulmeville Road, this 20-acre park includes six baseball/softball fields, lighted softball field, two soccer fields (lighted and unlighted), basketball court, street hockey rink, playground, storage garages, concession stands, and parking for 200 vehicles.

☐ *Yezzi Memorial Park*

Located at Hulmeville Road and Wildman Avenue, this park contains approximately 30 acres. Among the facilities provided include two lighted baseball/softball fields, six baseball/softball fields, two football fields (lighted and unlighted), concession stands, restrooms, and parking for 250 vehicles.

Potential Park Expansion Opportunities

Since the State of Pennsylvania is the largest landowner in the Township, with such holdings as the Youth Development Center and the State Police barracks, the Township should encourage that some of the proceeds from any future sale of these properties be dedicated to the purchase of open space in Bensalem. With the roads at capacity now, future development on these tracts would create a great deal of stress on the infrastructure of the Township. New parks and recreational facilities, along with other open space, would assist in easing the pressure on the infrastructure and help to expand the park system.

9.0 HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament

In October 2000, the Catholic Church canonized Sister Katherine Drexel as a Saint. St. Katherine Drexel took her final vows in 1891; a year later establishing the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Elizabeth's Convent in what is now the Cornwells Heights section of the Township. Through her work, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament established schools and institutions dedicated to assisting the poor, particularly African-Americans and American Indians. Her legacy is present today at the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (SBS) property.

Occupying 54 acres in Bensalem, the grounds include 110-year-old buildings influenced by European monasteries and Spanish/French architecture. St. Elizabeth's Chapel, the Mission Bell and the St. Katherine Drexel Shrine are on the site. The SBS has gained much attention with the sainthood of Katherine Drexel, drawing the Catholic faithful from throughout the region. Bensalem should cultivate and foster awareness of the shrine in concert with other historic and cultural offerings present in the Township.

Other Historic Preservation Sites

In 1995, The Heritage Conservancy, Inc. completed a survey of historic resources on behalf of the Bensalem Historical Society and the Township. The methodology included reviewing an 1891 Township map, locating pre-1945 subdivisions from Bucks County Recorder of Deeds records and transferring the locations onto a current tax map. Buildings were documented only if they were outstanding examples from a particular time period, were part of a well-preserved collection of houses from a particular period, or were in close proximity to other documented structures.

The National Park Service maintains the National Register of Historic Places, an official list of properties deemed worthy of preservation. This list includes properties considered significant to the nation, state or community that have been nominated by State and Federal agencies and have been approved by the National Park Service. Properties in Bensalem Township that have been so designated include the following:

- ***Andalusia Property*** – off State Road along Delaware River
Includes a mansion built in 1794, with additions made between 1833-1835. An engine house was added along the river around 1835; staff housing and a farm date back to 1850.
- ***Belmont House*** – 3779 Bristol Road

A stuccoed stone house built in 1860.

- ❑ **Growden Mansion** – 5408 Neshaminy Valley Drive
Stuccoed stone mansion built in 1740; small stone vault on property dates back to 1860.
- ❑ **Bensalem A.M.E. Church** – 1200 Bridgewater Road
Also known as Little Jerusalem A.M.E. Church; built in 1856.
- ❑ **St. Elizabeth's Convent** – 1633 Bristol Pike
Includes convent, chapel and Holy Providence school building completed in 1892; novitiate built in 1910; St. Catherine's Hall added in 1927.

The 1988 Comprehensive Plan listed other areas of historic interest, including the Williamson and Johnson Cemetery on Lerch Road as well as the Church of the Redeemer and King Library on Bristol Pike in Andalusia. The Williamson and Johnson Cemetery dates back to 1730, while the church was built in 1860. The library was added in 1882.

An even higher designation is the National Historic Landmark program, which is limited to properties designated by the Secretary of the Interior for their significance to all Americans. The Andalusia property has received this designation. According to its "statement of significance," dated November 13, 1996, this property was the home the Nicholas Biddle from 1821-1844. Mr. Biddle, who served as head of the Second Bank of the United States from 1823-1826, was a famous opponent of President Andrew Jackson. To the original house, whose north front is an outstanding example of the Regency style on the United States, he added a wing modeled on a Greek temple.²⁶

The 1988 Plan recommended the development of an 85-acre site to the north of the Andalusia property. This development was to include luxury townhouses and attached single-family dwellings. Fees paid by property owners at the site would have financed ongoing maintenance and restoration of the Andalusia property. This course of action was not followed.

The 1995 Historic Sites Survey of Bensalem revealed the various historic resources located throughout the Township. The riverfront and its proximity to Philadelphia led to the construction of many large estates during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These properties, as well as the open space available off of Street Road, can serve as a foundation to develop more passive uses along the riverfront. From the Andalusia property to the Dell and Pen Ryn properties, this area provides an outstanding collection of historic housing worthy of preservation.

²⁶ National Park Service – National Historic Landmark information web site.

Many other historic structures, including those not located near the riverfront, have a significant role in telling the story of Bensalem's history but have not been fully investigated. The following actions are recommended to assist in the preservation of Bensalem's historic resources:

- ☐ Using the 1995 Historic Sites Survey as a resource, investigate the potential of "high priority" preservation sites to qualify for National Register status.
- ☐ Cooperate with local agencies such as the Bucks County Redevelopment Authority to acquire blighted historic sites for restoration and/or readaptive uses.
- ☐ In conjunction with surrounding open space for passive and recreation uses, develop and promote Delaware River mansions as historic resources.
- ☐ Participate in Certified Local Government program to become eligible to apply for Federal grants for surveys, preservation and other tasks associated with historic preservation.
- ☐ Encourage continuing activity from Bensalem Historical Society in the identification, marking and preservation of historical sites, and to promote the history of the Township.

Bensalem Township has a wealth of historic resources within its borders. Ranging from large estates to smaller homes to houses of worship, the Township should utilize these resources to promote its cultural and historical identity. Historic resources should also be part of a broad economic development plan for the Township. These uses are not mutually exclusive, as many communities have strengthened their economic base by promoting their historic sites and buildings.

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10.0 POLICY STATEMENT OF PLAN RELATIONSHIPS

Section 301(a)(5) of the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code states that the Comprehensive Plan shall include "a statement indicating the relationship of the existing and proposed development of the municipality to the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous municipalities, to the objectives and plans for development in the county of which it is a part, and to regional trends." The Plan reviews similar actions taken by neighboring municipalities and Bucks County.

10.1 Summary of Master Plans of Adjacent Municipalities

Communities contiguous to Bensalem Township include Bristol Township, Middletown Township, Hulmeville Borough, Lower Southampton Township and the City of Philadelphia. Bensalem's updated Comprehensive Plan is generally compatible with the plans of contiguous municipalities.

Bristol Township

Bristol Township last updated its Comprehensive Plan in 1986. Bensalem and Bristol share Neshaminy Creek as a common border. The Bristol Township Plan encourages the creation of two flood plain preservation strips along the Neshaminy Creek and Delaware River. In addition, it recommends a marine commercial district along the Neshaminy Creek to regulate marina expansion and boat storage.

From the mouth of Neshaminy Creek at the Delaware River to US Route 13 is the Croydon neighborhood, an older low-density residential area. Like many of the older non-subdivisional residential areas of Bristol Township, there are several commercial and industrial uses mixed into the area. North of US Route 13 up to Interstate 95 are the neighborhoods of Croydon Manor, a postwar subdivision, and Croydon Acres, developed before World War II. Residential development, specifically single-family detached residences, is encouraged.

North of Interstate 95 to the Hulmeville Borough boundary is a mix of residential and commercial development. Keystone Industrial Park III is still under development and the 1986 Plan recommends developing a new shopping center on vacant industrial site. Lands adjacent to the Neshaminy Creek are proposed for preservation and parkland development. The 1986 Plan recommends phasing out the Neshaminy Sewage Treatment Plant and replacing it with a new facility outside the area.

Bensalem Township should work with Bristol Township in developing greenbelt and preserving open space along Neshaminy Creek. The Township should also review further development in Neshaminy Creek area, particularly any large commercial development in Keystone Industrial Park.

Middletown Township

Middletown Township borders Bensalem to the north and east, sharing Neshaminy Creek as a natural boundary. The Middletown Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted March 1, 1994. The predominant land use along the creek is residential, with parcels zoned OR (Open Space Recreation) along the waterfront. On Lincoln Highway West, vacant parcels along the creek are zoned M-1 (Manufacturing). Although Bucks County proposes a greenbelt along the Neshaminy Creek, the land is still available for intensive use that appear in conflict with the goal of protecting flood plain areas and preserving open space. Any development proposed for this area should be watched carefully.

Hulmeville Borough

A community of fewer than 1,000 residents, Hulmeville does not have a Comprehensive Plan. Hulmeville is predominantly single-family residential and does not anticipate large-scale projects within the Borough.

Lower Southampton Township

Located to the north of Bensalem, Lower Southampton last updated its Comprehensive Plan in 1980. The Township boundary runs along Brownsville Road from just north of Street Road to Bristol Road. This area is primarily single-family residential properties. South of Street Road, the boundary runs along Trevoise Road in an area that is primarily residential. Any redevelopment or streetscape plans along Brownsville Road, which has both neighborhood commercial and residential uses, should be pursued with the cooperation of Lower Southampton Township. In 2002, Lower Southampton Township will update its Comprehensive Plan. Bensalem officials should review any recommendations that may have an impact on the Township.

City of Philadelphia

The Poquessing Creek serves as a natural boundary between northeast Philadelphia and Bensalem Township. The last update of Philadelphia's Comprehensive Plan was in 1960. According to the Philadelphia Department of Planning, there has been very little change in the general land use trends in the area near Bensalem. Neighborhoods such as Somerton, Parkwood, Morrell Park and Torresdale retain their residential character. The Franklin Mills Mall, located on Knights Road just across the Poquessing Creek, generates significant traffic from Bensalem, most of it coming from the Pennsylvania Turnpike via Street Road.

The City is looking to zone surplus land around nearby Northeast Philadelphia Airport for industrial purposes. Currently the land is zoned for aviation-related uses, but an expansion of airport services or demand is not expected. In addition, the Byberry State Hospital site, located off Route 1 south of the Neshaminy Interplex may become a mixed-use development, including offices and a skating and indoor soccer center. Bensalem officials should watch developments closely, taking into account potential traffic and environmental impacts with regards to Poquessing Creek.

The Planning Department also stated that it was unlikely that State Route 63 (Woodhaven Road), originally intended to connect northeast Philadelphia with the Montgomery County suburbs, will be completed in the near future due to opposition from communities in the path of the highway.

10.2 Summary of Bucks County Comprehensive Plan

The Bucks County Board of Commissioners approved the County Comprehensive Plan on December 8, 1993. The document intends to emphasize the role played by municipalities and the need for coordinated efforts. The area is anticipated to continue to grow, but limited developable land will curtail growth opportunities. Infill, adaptive reuse and redevelopment projects may play an increasingly more important role in future growth, as noted in the 1993 *Bucks County Continuum*.

The Comprehensive plan has a series of goals spread out over a 10-year period. In issues ranging from housing to economic development to recreation and open space issues, the Township has taken a proactive role in addressing these concerns, as noted in this Master Plan. Bensalem Township is committed to continuing to address the goals of the Bucks County Comprehensive Plan through sound planning and zoning procedures intended for a mature community seeking to effectively manage growth.

Bensalem Township believes that the County Comprehensive Plan should be updated to reflect the needs and differences between the more developed lower portion of the County and the developing communities in Upper Bucks County. The differing needs between the two distinct sections of the County should be reflected in the County Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION TIME FRAME

The following charts reflect a projected time frame for the objectives outlined in this Plan. The tasks are outlined in short term (1 to 2 years), medium term (3 to 5 years) and long term (6 to 10 years). Several of the tasks are considered "ongoing," meaning that the work toward the goal is a constant for the Township since the objective deals with constant issues such as infrastructure repair and funding. These charts are intended to provide an idea of what actions to take following adoption of the Plan and for the next 10 years, the time period that this plan is intended to cover.

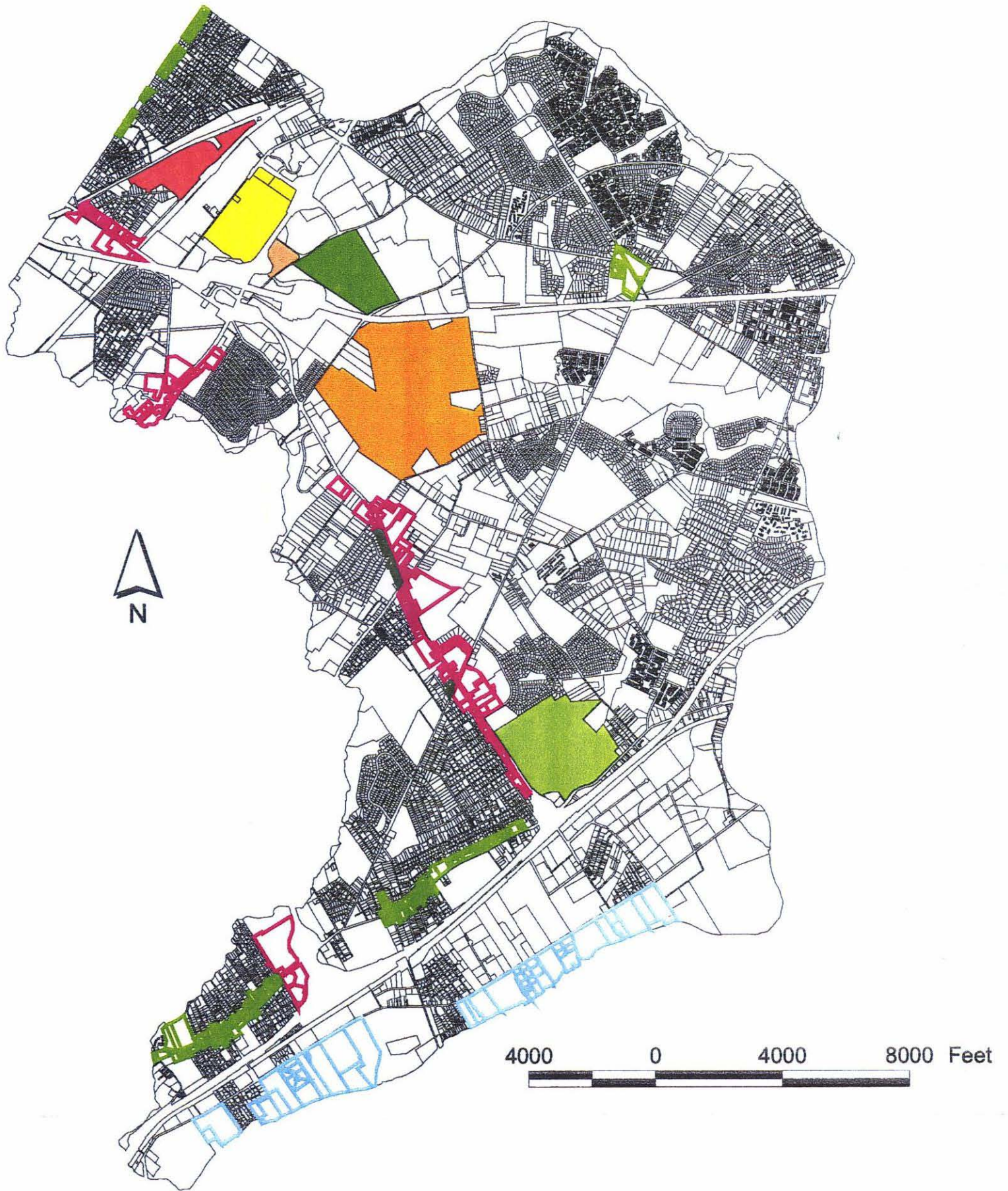
IMPLEMENTATION OF OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years
LAND USE			
Delaware River Waterfront Development			
- Draft Overlay Zoning			
- Encourage Mixed-Use Development			
- Promote waterfront area for redevelopment and open space opportunities			
Commercial Zoning			
- Study Consistency of Commercial Zones			
- Draft "highway commercial" zoning			
- Draft "neighborhood commercial" zoning			
- Amend PCD district to permit broader range of land uses			
- Encourage development of professional office uses			
- Consolidate declining commercial centers to areas of higher intensity use			
Recreation Zoning District			
- Expand existing district to include all parks, greenways, etc.			
- Work with Bucks County to identify and acquire parcels for preservation			
Design Guidelines			
- Review residential and commercial design guidelines			
- Implement policies recommended in Andalusia design study			
TRANSPORTATION			
- Work with SEPTA to explore mass transit opportunities			
- Study capacity issues on minor arterials and collector roads			
- Promote development of bicycle paths and trails throughout Township			
- Work with PA Turnpike commission regarding Exit 28 and Interstate 95			
- Develop plan to obtain funding for future road improvements			

IMPLEMENTATION OF OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years
HOUSING			
- Review code enforcement program			
- Strengthen code enforcement where required			
- Encourage provision of affordable housing opportunities			
- Examine opportunities to expand age-restricted housing opportunities			
- Apply for CDBG funds and other grants for rehabilitation of housing			
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT			
- Encourage development of tax ratables with minimal impact on residents			
- Participate in Enterprise Zone of Bucks County			
- Review commercial and mixed land use options for waterfront			
- Promote Bensalem as regional commercial center			
PARKS AND OPEN SPACE			
- Identify environmentally sensitive areas for open space preservation			
- Develop greenways around Neshaminy and Poquessing Creeks			
- Continue enhancement of park system through land acquisition			
- Continue to improve and upgrade park and recreation facilities			
HISTORIC RESOURCES			
- Identify historic buildings and sites to encourage preservation			
- Develop awareness of historic sites as Township attraction and asset			
- Participate in Certified Local Government program			
COMMUNITY FACILITIES			
- Enhance municipal services to meet needs of community			
- Study water and sewer capacity to determine ability to meet future needs			
- Utilize GIS mapping to promote Township and to enhance services			

Potential Zoning Amendments and Major Parcels Bensalem Township Bucks County, Pa



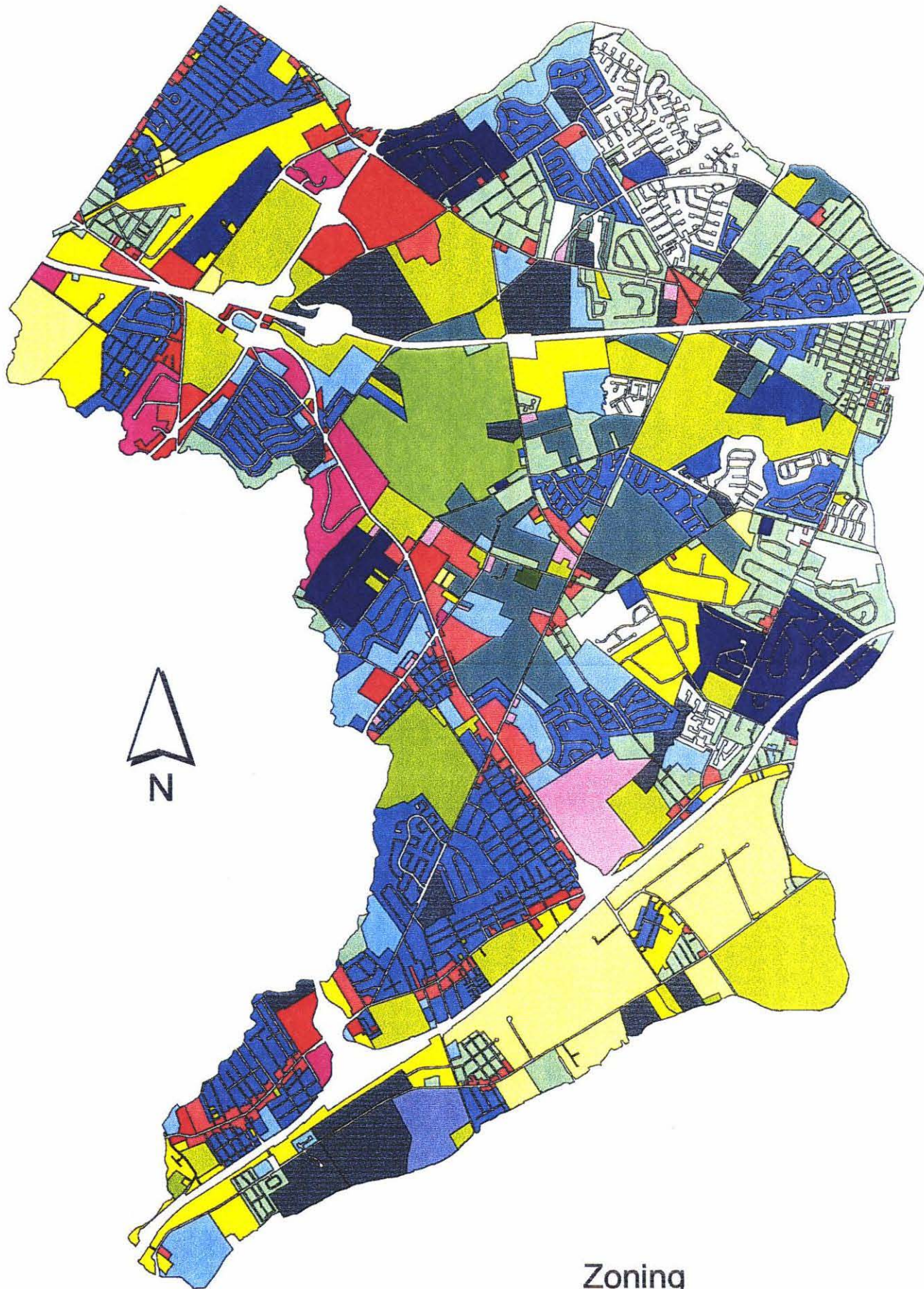
Developable Parcels

- Philadelphia Park Racetrack
- St. Francis Vocational School
- State Police Barracks
- Vacant Land near Neshaminy Mall
- Youth Development Center
- Eastern State School
- Parcels

























Commercial Areas to Consolidate Zoning - Potential Locations

- Highway Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Waterfront Development Overlay District
- Business and Professional District

Zoning Map Bensalem Township Bucks County, PA



Zoning

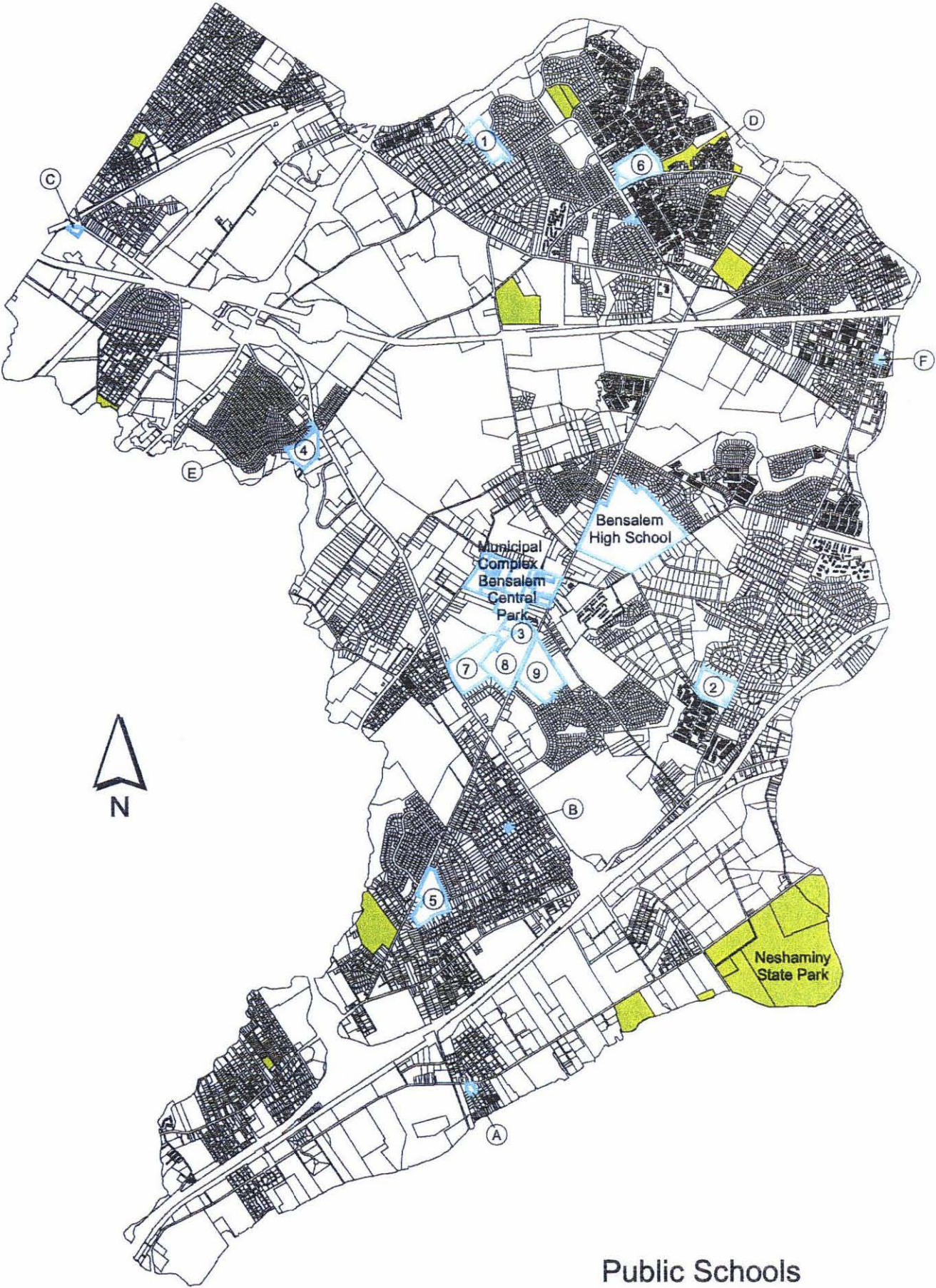
	R-1 Residential District		G-I General Industrial
	R-11 residential District		L-I Light Industrial District
	R-2 Residential District		BP Business and Professional District
	R-22 Residential District		G-C General Commercial
	R-3 Townhouse District		H-C1 Highway Commercial District
	R-33 Intermediate Density Residential District		PCD Planned Commerce Park District
	R-3A Residential District		REC Recreational District
	R-55 Planned Residential Community District		SCH Special Citizen Housing
	R-A Rural District		IN Institutional
	R-A-1 Residential District		CSD Convention Stadium District
	R-A-2 Residential District		
	A-D Apartment District		
	R-AA Conservation District		
	MHP Mobile Home Park		



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Community Facilities Map
Bensalem Township
Bucks County, PA



Fire Stations

- (A) Union No. 37
- (B) Eddington No. 28
- (C) Trevoise No. 4
- (D) Cornwells No. 16
- (E) Nottingham No. 65
- (F) Newport No. 44

 Public Parks

Public Schools

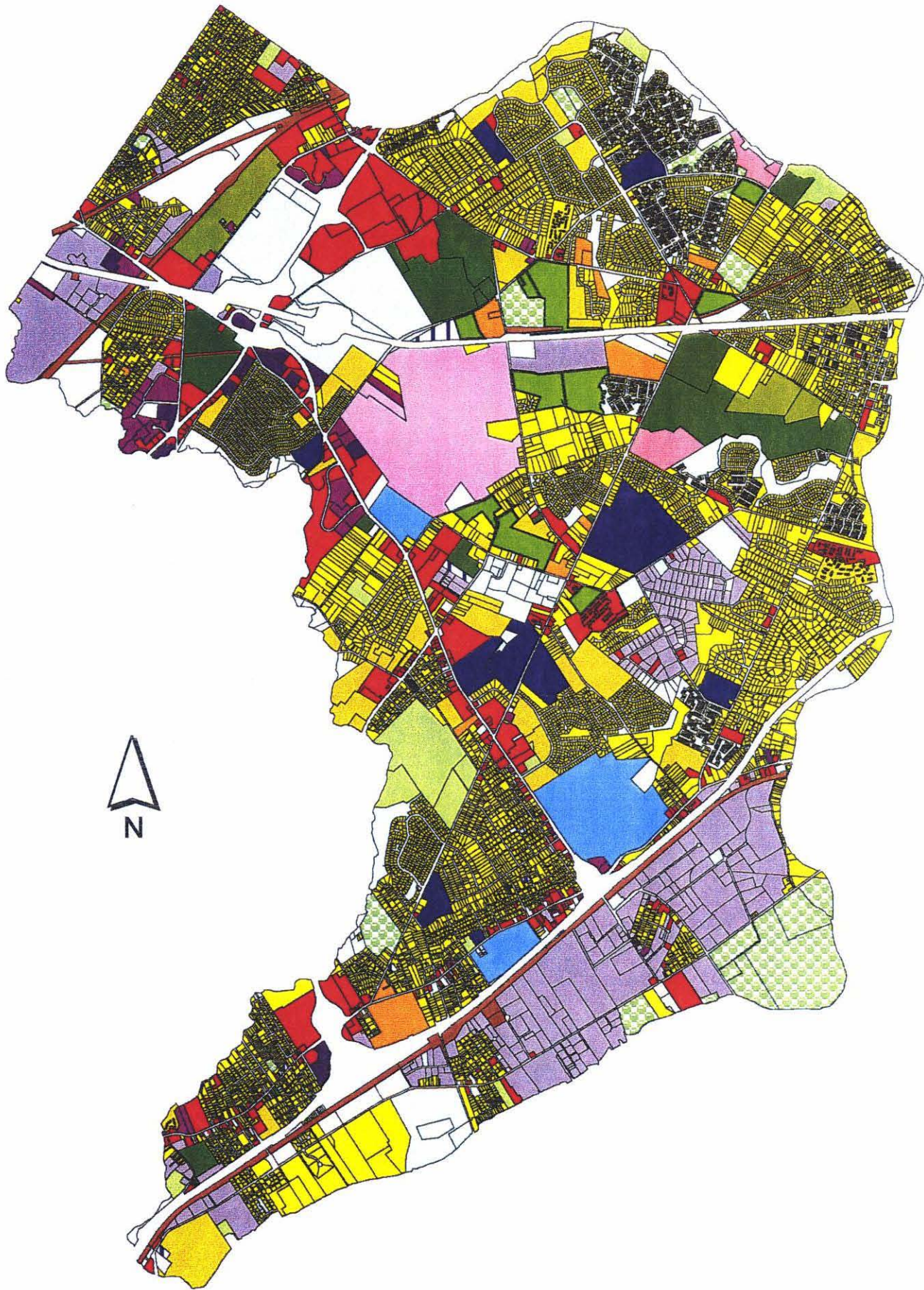
- (1) Belmont Hills Elementary School
- (2) Russell Struble Elementary School
- (3) Benjamn Rush Elementary School
- (4) Samuel K. Faust Elementary School
- (5) Cornwells Elementary School
- (6) Valley Elementary School
- (7) Neil Armstrong Middle School
- (8) Cecilia Snyder Middle School
- (9) Robert K. Schaefer Middle School

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Existing Land Use Map Bensalem Township Bucks County, PA



Land Use

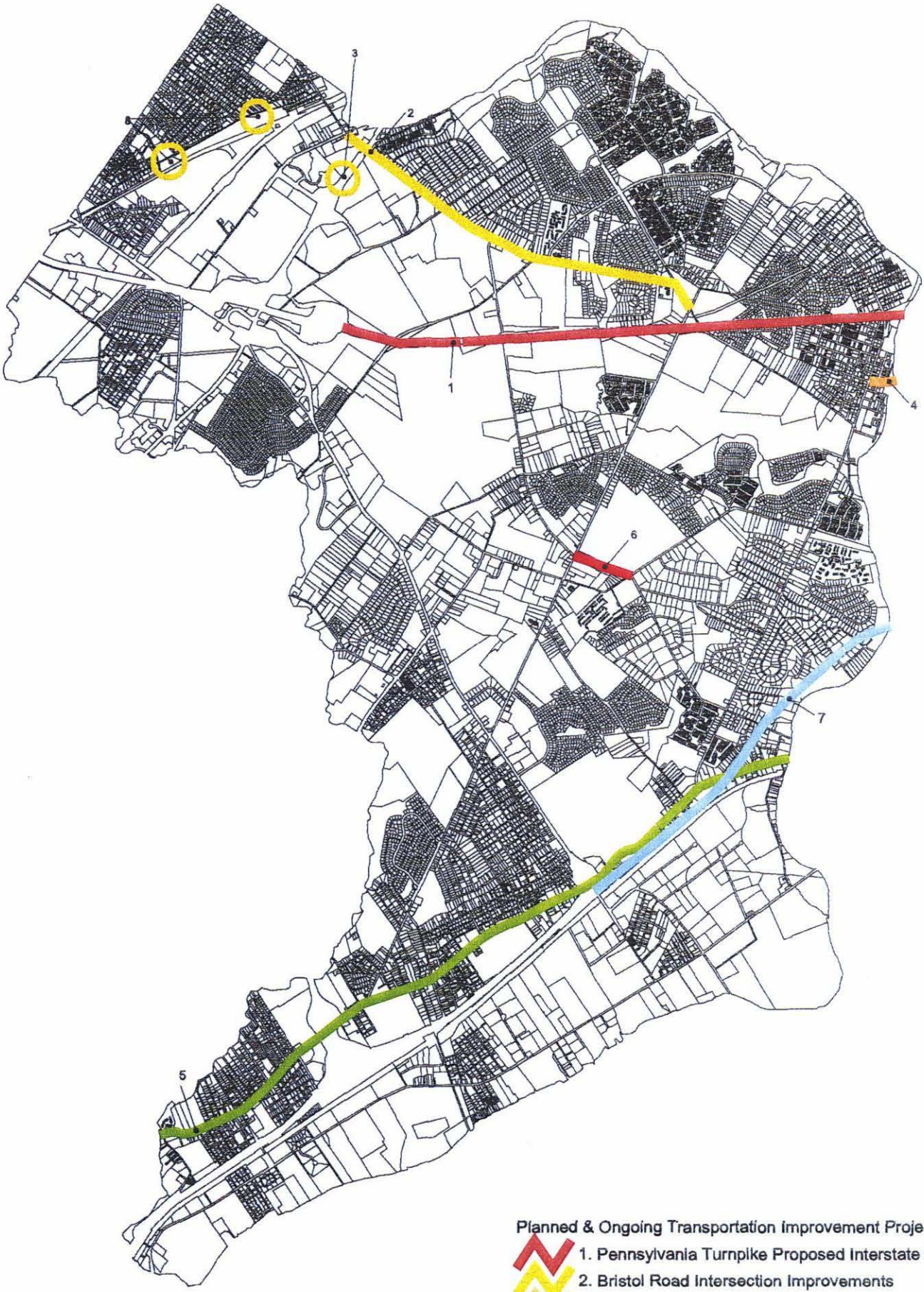
	PUBLIC UTILITY		PUBLIC PARK		INDUSTRIAL
	PLACES OF WORSHIP		PUBLIC SCHOOL		SINGLE FAMILY
	CEMETERIES		OTHER PUBLIC LAND		TWO FAMILY
	NON-PROFIT		RETAIL/COMMERCIAL		MULTI FAMILY
	PRIVATE SCHOOL		PROFESSIONAL OFFICE		MOBILE HOME
	VACANT		HOTEL/MOTEL		
	RACE TRACK		RESIDENTIAL HEALTH CARE FACILITIES		
	FARMS		RETAIL/COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL		
	PRIVATE RECREATIONAL				

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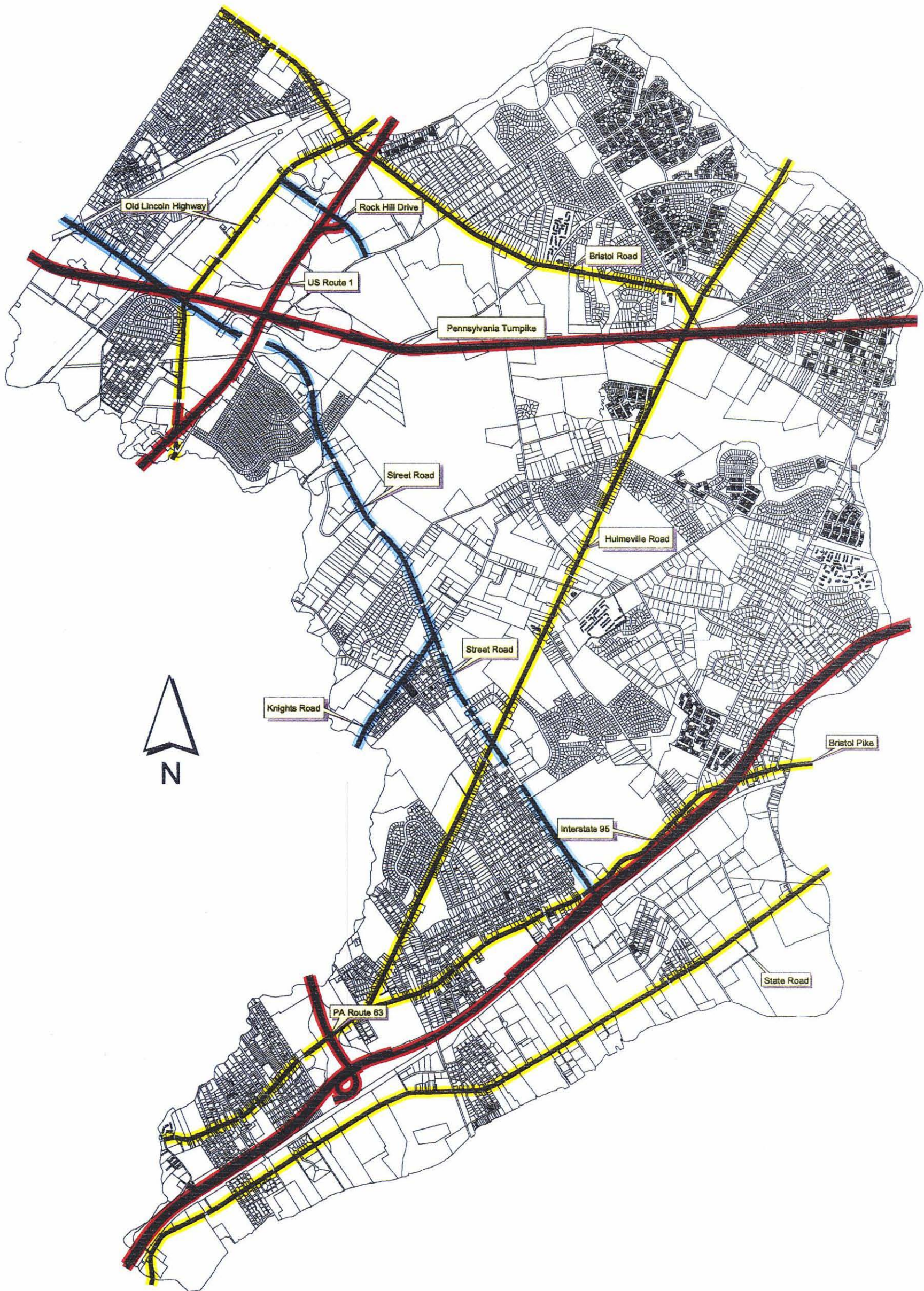
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Planned and Ongoing Transportation Improvement Projects Bensalem Township Bucks County, PA



- Planned & Ongoing Transportation Improvement Projects**
- 1. Pennsylvania Turnpike Proposed Interstate 95 Interchange
 - 2. Bristol Road Intersection Improvements
 - 3. US Route 1 Interchange Upgrades & Bridge Deck Improvements
 - 4. New Falls Road Bridge Rehabilitation
 - 5. US Route 13 Closed Loop Traffic Signal System
 - 6. Proposed Connection From Galloway Road To Bridgewater Road At By Berry Road
 - 7. Interstate 95 Restoration & Rehabilitation
 - 8. Commuter Park & Ride Lots Improvements and Expansion
- Parcels

Circulation Map
Bensalem Township
Bucks County, PA



- Circulation
- Parcels
 - Expressways
 - Major Arterials
 - Minor Arterials



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